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**Berna Reale, Cantando na chuva (Singin' in the Rain), 2014, detail.**  
**Courtesy of the artist**

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É tanta coisa que não cabe aqui.



# TRANSNATIONAL DIALOGUES 2015-16

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‘Global Reach: Transnational Dialogues for Youth across Brazil China Europe’ is a series of co-ordinated activities which took place in Brazil, China, Germany, Italy, Portugal and the UK within an eighteen-month time-frame. It included extensive research and production, mobility, and dissemination activities. The project, run by the non-profit NGO European Alternatives and a consortium of grassroots NGOs, mid-level institutions, informal groups, and public authorities active in the youth, cultural and creative fields, researched and developed innovative models to challenge the precariousness and marginalisation of younger generations. The project developed around the model of a temporary transnational community called a ‘Nomadic Residency’, which took place in several locations across Europe (September-October 2015), Brazil (March 2016) and China (June 2016), involving around 20 ‘fellows’ from the artistic, creative, social, political and academic sectors. Transnational Dialogues is looking forward to continuing to build and foster its unmatched network of young professionals and organisations across the three regions.

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# TRANSNATIONAL DIALOGUES

JOURNAL 2016

- 6 FRAGMENTS OF A JOURNEY LUIGI GALIMBERTI
- 10 BETWEEN CROWDS AND EMPIRES ROBIN RESCH
- 15 SPECULATIONS ON THE FIFTH INCOME PEDRO VICTOR BRANDÃO
- 17 ACTIVATING COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE FELIPE DUARTE
- 18 WHAT IS LOST IS LOST FOREVER SUN SIWEI 孙思维
- 22 HOW I MET MEPHISTOPHELES IN A CO-WORKING SPACE AND ENDED  
UP IN CHINA ERIK RODRIGUES
- 24 AN UNDERGROUND MIDDLE PATH CHEN YIMING 陈奕名
- 28 CTRL – RETHINKING CULTURAL ASSETS, DE-CAPITALISING  
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY MARGHERITA D'ANDREA AND  
CORRADO GEMINI
- 32 NEW FORMS OF PROXIMITY INDY JOHAR INTERVIEWED  
BY NOEL HATCH
- 35 THE WAY OF THE MARGINS JULIJANA NICHÁ
- 38 COLLECTIVES AND BOTTOM-UP INITIATIVES IVA ČUKIĆ
- 40 HACK (Y)OUR BORDERS NOEL HATCH
- 42 THE SIXTH RING PROJECT INTERVIEW WITH MAN YU 满宇,  
GE FEI 葛非 AND GE LEI 葛磊
- 46 THE EMBODIED MARGINS JOTA MOMBAÇA
- 50 TRA(N)SLATING ART LUIGI GALIMBERTI

# FRAGMENTS

# OF

# A JOURNEY

LUIGI GALIMBERTI

Transnational Dialogues started in 2011, embarking on a fascinating journey from Europe to China, then to Brazil, and eventually back to Europe. The first moves of the journey were with the relaxed but unpredictable pace of a *flâneur*. Translating *flâneur* into Chinese required a collective and disproportionate amount of effort, with unexpected findings; the Chinese translation of the word suggests the gentleman stroller of city streets is a “thug” when exercising his investigative power in the *hutongs* of Beijing.

A curious, and each time larger audience gathered for those first ephemeral discussions. Competences and perspectives were mixed and matched. The leisurely stroll became the relentless procession of a series of Caravans, which for more than two years followed both old and new routes, attempting crossings that had been largely unexplored. The step from China to Brazil was ambitious, but unavoidable. It was pushed by the desire to go beyond the limits of the nation-states that dictate the rules of politics and economics, to gain a more comprehensive vision of this globalised world, and to create and strengthen independent networks of individuals and organisations in these areas.

The Caravans involved about a hundred young researchers, practitioners and political activists from the fields of architecture, urbanism, design, visual arts, philosophy, poetry, as well as other fields of work and life. They exchanged and co-created against a backdrop of what was rightly perceived as the first cracks of three fragile utopias: that of Brazil, China and Europe. The Brazilian economic miracle of sunny beaches and irresistible sambas quickly came into question with the protests of June 2013, which dared to ask whose utopia the politicians and the media were talking about when a significant proportion of the country’s people could not afford a twenty-cents raise of the bus fare. The Chinese Dream of a *harmonious society*, based on economic liberalism and political authoritarianism, was also taking its toll on the lives of those who were cut out from the benefits of the country’s growth, suffering physically and psychologically for the lack of their civil and political rights, as the citizens of Hong Kong – soon to become the stage of the Umbrella Movement – had experienced.

Finally, in the European Union, short-sightedness and inadequate bureaucrats and politicians failed to address the widespread discontent and social suffering that had been accumulating for years, leading to what will probably be considered the most severe political crisis since the end of the Second World War: Britain refreshed its imperial nostalgia, Crimea once more became a war stage, and far right politicians continue to carve their positions of power by promoting religious and racial hatred. Returning from our journey, the Europe we expected to come back to, was changed irretrievably. In

fact, we could no longer find *that* Europe. We were left in between spaces, reduced to fragments dispersed along the global flux of ideas, ideas that we had opened up, but were quickly overwhelmed by.

As a last recourse, we shifted our discourse from utopic political visions, to the reality of the margins, from the solitary investigation of the *flâneur*, to the collective re-organisation of labour. While in advanced economies today’s younger generation risks ending up poorer than their parents, in less-developed economies new forms of (extreme) poverty and exclusion are on the rise. Despite being largely invisible, deprived of financial means and, in several instances, denied their legal rights, individuals and organisations throughout Brazil, China, Europe (as indeed all over the world), are battling for a fairer redistribution of resources and for the creation of a social environment based on cooperation and sharing, rather than on aggressiveness and extortion. In 2015 and 2016, Transnational Dialogues ran a Nomadic Residency which took place in several locations across Europe, Brazil and China. The residency created a temporary transnational community of individuals and organisations from the artistic, creative, social, political and academic fields.

This Journal mirrors the two principal thematic approaches of the project, made up of contributions by its fellows as well as a number of other voices we wanted to bring to light.

The first section, ‘Between Crowds and Empires’ (co-edited by Robin Resch), examines the polarities of collaborative and sharing economies, taking into account the different cultural perspectives from Europe, China and Brazil. What was meant to be a technical assessment and comparison of best practises in the field of new economies gradually transformed itself into an analysis of power relations, as well as an introspective journey (Sun Siwei, p. 18) for those that practice and test every day new models of working together in the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro (Rodrigues, p. 22), or in the settlements inhabited by irregular migrants in Beijing (Chen Yiming, p. 24).

The transition from ‘sharing’ to ‘the sharing economy’ (roughly speaking, from Couchsurfing to Airbnb), exemplifies the extractive model of global capital which speculates on the collective creation of intellectual or material values (e.g., the trust and review system), by driving all profits up the financial chain (Brandão, p. 15). Consequently, renting your spare bedroom (or tools, or time etc.) makes everyone profitable for someone else, transferring value from the masses to the few, from the crowds – whose privacy is being invariably violated – to the corporate empires that maintain a hegemony of data over our daily lives, as well as cultural and political domains (Resch, p. 10).

Among all these contradictions however, there are opportunities to turn ideas and aspirations into sustainable business models,



bridging creativity with entrepreneurship and employability. The re-organisation of labour in the music industry, for instance, requires de-capitalising intellectual property and re-thinking cultural assets (D’Andrea and Gemini, p. 28). New forms of proximity and collaboration that go beyond those largely ineffective playgrounds that are co-working spaces, are also being developed. Enabling transnational forms of collaboration does not merely require new technologies, but rather open protocols (Johar, p. 32). It is also, most of all, a matter of changing our own (self-)perceptions (Duarte, p. 17).

The second section, ‘Marginalia’ (co-edited by Julijana Nicha), deals with the inequalities and racialisation of geopolitics. Social marginalisation is made visible, repelled, enhanced, denounced and/or metabolised (Mombaça, p. 46). The body gives a further, nomadic spatial dimension to marginality. The body moves and breaks through the borders between the margins and the centre. It takes the margin to the centre; it takes the margin beyond the margin and to other margins<sup>1</sup>.

The internally displaced people of China, such as those that have been victims of natural or environmental disasters, the indigenous populations of Brazil, those dwelling in areas under the constant threat of being evicted to make way for urban ‘regeneration’, the uninterrupted flows of migrants crossing through Europe, fleeing their native lands because of war and misery, hoping to build a more dignified life for themselves and their families: all these people represent the moving margins. They are the moving margins that dare to question the meaning and the juridical validity of the physical, economical, social and moral borders that are being built and strengthened, in the European Union and elsewhere (Galimberti, p. 50).

However, with the aggravation of social inequalities and poverty, and the rise of unemployment and existential uncertainty, especially among young people, groups and individuals are seeking niches beyond traditional social structures in order to achieve their desires and needs (Čukić, p. 38). Furthermore, over-simplified cultural and social policies, which encourage the dichotomisation between the centre and the margins, are being superseded by the practices of grassroots organisations and their concern for the commons and for the sharing of resources and technologies with all members of society (Nicha, p. 35). Boundaries can be subverted, and so can the rules that define how we are allowed to manage and access the commons (Hatch, p. 40).

Major field surveys on such fundamental elements of life as food, hygiene, education, transportation or accommodation are autonomously designed and conducted by informal groups. This was the case for ‘The Sixth Ring Project’, which for over a year involved more than fifty artists, film directors, writers, architects and designers in the administrative villages within the fifth and sixth ring roads of Beijing (Man Yu, Ge Fei and Ge Lei, p. 42). By bringing to light this and other examples in this Journal, we hope to encourage our readers to work towards the co-creation of a society in which, as in the words of Franco Berardi, “we can renounce accumulation and growth and be happy sharing the wealth that comes from past industrial labour and present collective intelligence”<sup>2</sup>.

Interspersed between the texts and their accompanying images are three visual contributions by artists Dai Hua代化, Berna Reale and Tobias Zielony.

Dai Hua’s ‘Map of China 1911–2010’ (2010) starts with the Wuchang Uprising of 10 October 1911, when the sounds of gunshots mixed with the noises of the Manchu’s queues being cut. This led to a century without Empire but, as in curator Cheng Meixin’s words, “the dream that the world is for the public still has not come true. Instead, the dream is now to be rich and glorious”<sup>3</sup>. This ‘Chinese Dream’ (2013) is depicted as the big fat star, which represents the dominant Han ethnicity, crushing the tiny stars, the minorities (or, more generally, all those excluded by the economic bonanza), who sweat to sustain a dream they cannot enjoy. ‘Birth and Destruction’ (2008) is a vertical panel that starts with God and Lucifer and ends with a house of cards, depicting in-between various stories of extinction (e.g., a dinosaur hit by an asteroid, a polar bear complaining about air conditioning causing global warming). “Less is More” becomes “Less is Bore” and Pope Clement VIII is portrayed to be sentencing to death Giordano Bruno in front of a giant washing machine, while getting a Facebook-style thumbs-down.

Berna Reale refers to the tragic state of the country’s ravaging inequality as the artist in gold suit dances to the tune ‘Singin’ in the Rain’ (2014), while walking on a red carpet laid on a vast expanse of rubbish. ‘Soledade’ (2013) exposes the farcical side of Brazilian politics, in which a solitary Dilma, dressed in an impeccable blue suit and adorned with an elegant pearl necklace, parades along the streets of a slum on a golden chariot pulled by four pigs. However, the power that excludes and extorts is not satisfied with dark humour but instead finds its deepest fulfilment with terror. “Palomo” (2012) is a monstrous creature, a military centaur that brings fear and submission to the empty streets of a Brazilian city. The body of the woman, exposed as merchandise outside Belém’s famous market Ver-o-peso, is the banquet for a flock of vultures, ‘When they all come down’ (2009).

Tobias Zielony exhibited the photographic series ‘The Citizen’ (2015) at the German Pavilion of the 56th Venice Art Biennale. He took pictures of refugees (mainly from Ghana and Cameroon) here in Europe, and then tried to get those pictures published in newspapers in the countries of origin of the refugees. The people he photographed were saying: “We have a voice; we have a face; we want to come out of this invisibility, of the isolation of the refugee camps”. The artist built a political discourse around migrants as an incarnation of a double margin; the margin of Africa, that was expelling them, and the margin of Europe, that was repelling them. He also gave voice to those that, despite deprivation and humiliation, are building a political discourse about global inequality and neo-colonialism that cannot be ignored for too long, unless what we want is “to live in a century of violence, misery, and war”<sup>4</sup>.

**LUIGI GALIMBERTI** is the Director of Transnational Dialogues



1 Watch the Talk Real Marginalia, <https://youtu.be/1hWwdmaGyGQ>.  
2 Franco Berardi Bifo, ‘The Future After the End of the Economy’, e-flux Journal #30, 12/2011, <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/the-future-after-the-end-of-the-economy/>.  
3 <http://www.dhok.net/map/map.htm>.  
4 Franco Berardi Bifo, op. cit.



# COLLABORATIVE ECONOMY: BETWEEN CROWDS AND EMPIRES

ROBIN RESCH

*Between Crowds and Empires* is a research project that examines the polarities of collaborative economies, taking into account the differing cultural perspectives of three contexts: China, Brazil and Europe. A team of young researchers, artists and designers have sought to confront the contradictions intertwined with the phenomena of collaboration as a promising economic innovation of our time. Key terms for the study included; *artistic entrepreneurship, collaborative powerhouses, online-colonialism, piracy into privacy, exponential organisations, the future of labour in the creative economies, platform capitalism, politics of algorithm and economic empowerment*.

We started our collective journey with a set of interviews conducted while visiting artists, philosophers, anthropologists, designers, and programmers. The aim was to discuss, envision, and analyse projects and ideas that illustrate the opportunities, threats, and potentials of alternative economies. During these discussions, we critically studied the new online empires that reach into every corner of our private lives – my car is your car, my flat, my screwdriver, my photo, my data. The process showed us just how important it is to explore and expose these tendencies of the corporate empires to develop a hegemony of data that intervene in our daily lives, as well as further on into our cultural and political domains.

After starting to draw this initial, bigger picture, we proceeded by researching concrete examples of sharing and collaboration, in order to identify possible spaces for interventions into local social, cultural and economic spaces.

During the European Residency in Berlin in 2015, we participated in the SOLIKON Conference and the week of change and transformation, during which activists and contributors from alternative economies, open knowledge, open data, open science and other movements presented projects and initiatives around the central topics of making solidarity economy ideas more prominent, learning from the Global South, and supporting regional networks<sup>1</sup>. An interesting find during the event was the 84 year-old Paul Singer, the current, and one-and-only Brazilian State Secretary for the solidarity economy, who intends to explore new ways of reducing poverty through a mix of social change and environmental awareness amongst lower-income households.

Whilst economic effects seem to have spilled into the last corners of public and private life, the optimists however consider the collaborative economy as a significant opportunity for advancing mankind toward a form of economic activity directly related to the social and cultural transformation of society for the better.

At this point in our research, we also took up the invitation to the Entrepreneurship Summit in Berlin, organised by the Foundation for Entrepreneurship, set up by Günter Faltin, the author of *Brain versus Capital* and *Wir sind das Kapital (We Are the Capital)*. Faltin, a serial founder and business guru himself, promotes a new culture of entrepreneurship that is based on the concept that disruptive ideas should result in entrepreneurial solutions to society's most complex problems. Faltin maintains that anyone can be an entrepreneur, and that the economic domain should not be left only to the experts: according to Faltin, with a good idea, a great passion for the subject, and a focus on your real personal capacities, every one of us can make it.

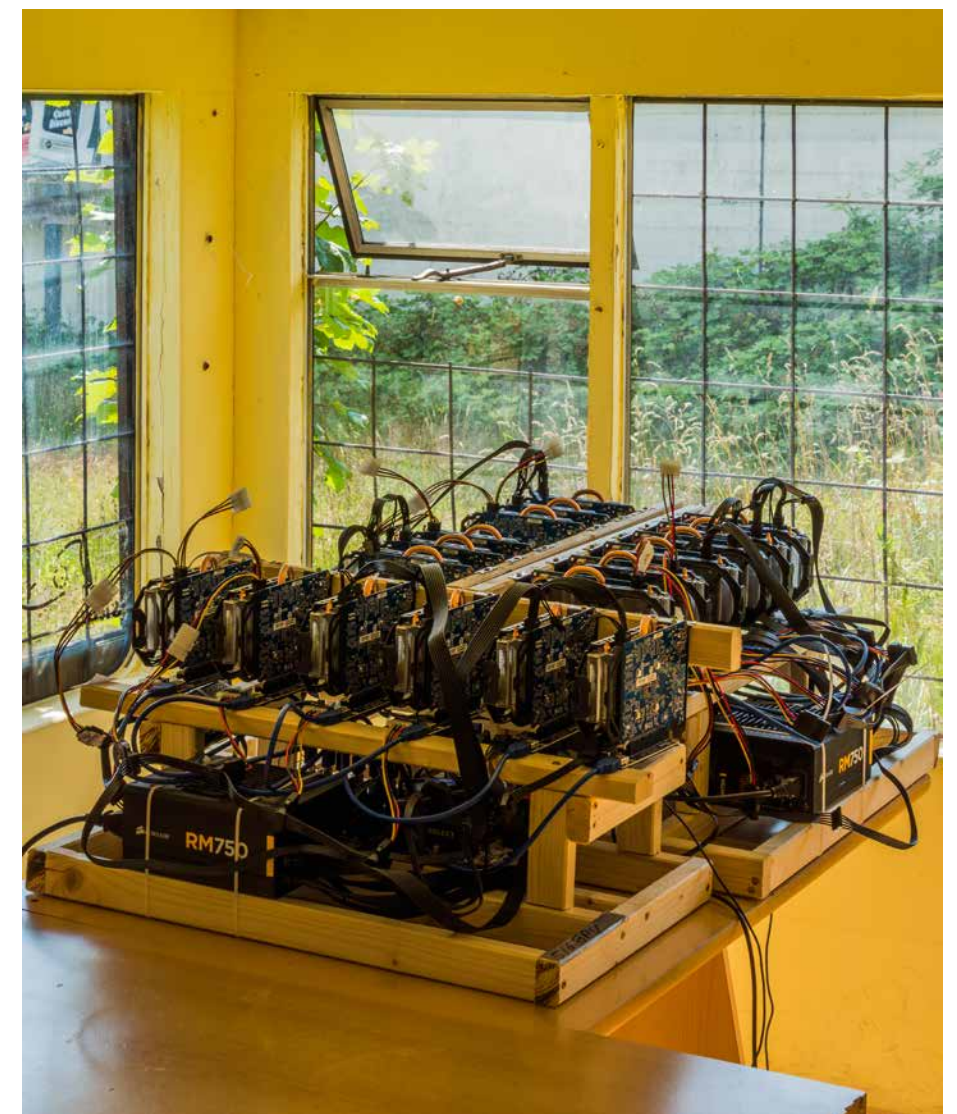
"Entrepreneurship offers an opportunity for unconventional ideas and views. It aims at achieving success through transcending established structures, and it attracts artists, mavericks and all those who formerly were marginal to the business world"<sup>2</sup>.

Our experience at the Entrepreneurship Summit drove us to further investigation. We were particularly interested in the artistic dimension and how the collaborative economy could become promising breeding ground for artists.

Especially against the backdrop of the currently changing and challenging labour system, artists with their ability to cross boundaries, and apply their unusual mix of disciplines when creating research-based artworks, could play an important role in experimenting, crafting and proposing new ideas for a more maker-based civilisation. It is about that special ability to climb and jump out of the box, to shape and re-imagine complex arenas of social, cultural and environmental challenges. As a result, an artwork can be a display, a perceptive format that shapes the understanding and perspectives of the viewer and how he or she relates to the subject in a wider sense. An example of this can be found in the work of the Brazilian artist Pedro Victor Brandão, who has produced pieces on alternative currencies like the Bitcoin<sup>3</sup>.

During the *Archipel Invest Project*, Pedro developed with Maíra das Neves the artistic project the *pit*, a self-sufficient system that produces natural and financial resources for local community use<sup>4</sup>. This included installing three 'crypto-currency' mines as generators of Bitcoin, which created a fund for a temporary communal park and its activities, including paying rent.

Our research into the collaborative economy showed us that there is great potential for artistic projects within the cultural-economic domain, but this would require more long-term programmes and more concrete (funding) opportunities from cultural players, cura-



PEDRO VICTOR BRANDÃO, GIGANTE MINERADOR (MINER GIANT) #1, #2, AND #3, FROM THE PROJECT THE PIT, DEVELOPED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH MAÍRA DAS NEVES; FINANCIAL SCULPTURE: WOOD, SCREWS (STEEL), ELECTRONIC PRINTED CIRCUITS (ALUMINIUM, COPPER, INDIUM, GOLD, PLASTIC, SILVER, PALLADIUM, SELENIUM, SILICON, AND ZINC) AND ALGORITHMS; VARIABLE DIMENSIONS, 2014

tors, directors and founding authorities. This would allow for a more vivid space for exchange between disciplines, helping to establish incubators for radical, process-oriented experimentation. In this way, artistic creativity and critical imagination could directly flow and intervene in the different sectors of the economy, helping to tackle and resolve many of the existing problems and major challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

During the development of *Between Crowds and Empires*, we went through an exciting and extremely debate-oriented group process. The results of our research will flow into a forthcoming online publication with many diverse creative voices from Brazil, China, Europe and beyond<sup>5</sup>.

**ROBIN RESCH** is an artist and curator from Berlin. He is a founding member of Artoholics – tracing on cultural, social and urban phenomena. In his work he researches on the visual representation of power in architecture and urban development.

1 <http://solikon2015.org/en>

2 Faltin Foundation, <https://www.entrepreneurship.de/about/>

3 Bitcoin is a currency based on distributed computing. It is decentralized, digital, and global.

4 An international artistic research project by KUNSTrePUBLIK, <http://archipel-invest.eu/>

5 Check [www.transnationaldialogues.eu](http://www.transnationaldialogues.eu)











of reality in which the crisis *is* the government itself (The Invisible Comite, 2014).

In March 2015 we set off travelling through Panama for three weeks, with the plan of investigating both the cultural scene of the city (with visits to artists, galleries, journalists and museums), and the financial reality of the country. We ran into the country's very fluid tax regime on numerous occasions. U.S. dollar loans were widely available and, being a foreigner, one can incorporate a shell company with the initial amount of just 100 dollars, without paying any tax. During our research we also came across the Brazilian company Odebrecht, which was present in most of the urban infrastructure works in the country. In the last 10 years this company has become the largest builder in Panama: its latest venture, started in May 2016, is the complete reconstruction of the city of Colón, on the Caribbean coast, which is the largest free trade zone in the West.

During our three weeks of research, we focused on two axes. The first axis, which generated the film-essay *A oferta não equivale à procura* [Supply does not equal demand], was the observation of some of Odebrecht's works in Panama City. What most caught our attention was the *Cinta Costera III*, a bizarre maritime viaduct, which both cancels out the horizon line and threatens the status of the World Heritage Site of *Casco Viejo*, the historic centre of Panama City. Phases I, II and III of the construction have already been completed, but there is still a planned sequel phase IV.

Almost all the images of this film-essay have graphic changes through overlays and features that liquefy and pervert its documentary aspect. The accompanying captions are taken from an administrative technology manual, written in 1968 by the Executive Norberto Odebrecht (founder of the construction company), forming a kind of collage between mission and achievement. It is interesting to return to the Protestant origins of the company, now that the *Lava-Jato* [Car Wash] investigation is interrupting a cycle of public-private partnerships mediated by lobbies, influence peddling and donations to political campaigns, stretching back through 60 years of developmentalist strategies.

Some sequences show the new financial centre of the city, a skyline of very tall buildings, some of more than 80 floors. At night you can see the majority of them with the lights off. There is a direct relationship between money-laundering and the real estate market in Panama City. These properties serve as collateral for the opening of shell companies, and in some cases, can even function as currency, ensuring the financial stability of dangerous elites, such as bankers, drug dealers, dictators, and tax dodgers of all kinds<sup>2</sup>.

The second axis, which led to the creation of the photographic series *Cynthia nos vê de perto* [Cynthia sees us closely], functions as a kind of counterpoint; a self-surveillance experiment, using a camera

designed to photograph animals. Called a 'trail camera' or 'camera trap', the camera is triggered by a motion sensor and heat, often used by biologists and foresters in the field. Just as we were investigating the presence of speculative capital, the camera (named 'Cynthia', in honour of the *Cinta Costera*) was investigating us, accompanying us in most of our walks through the city. It is a commentary on the global surveillance state to which we are all currently exposed, and a way to break the monopoly of the product that privacy has become.

Certainly, in the last 10 years we have seen a decrease in the opacity levels of various systems. From February to May 2016 we saw the leak of almost the whole database of the Mossack Fonseca law firm, responsible for the management of more than 300,000 shell companies in Panama – the Panama Papers. The person responsible for the leak wrote an anonymous letter – known as the manifesto of John Doe – which was not widely disseminated, an excerpt of which I would like to share here<sup>3</sup>:

"Income inequality is one of the defining issues of our time. It affects all of us, the world over. The debate over its sudden acceleration has raged for years, with politicians, academics and activists alike helpless to stop its steady growth despite countless speeches, statistical analyses, a few meagre protests, and the occasional documentary. Still, questions remain: why? And why now?

The Panama Papers provide a compelling answer to these questions: massive, pervasive corruption. And it's not a coincidence that the answer comes from a law firm. More than just a cog in the machine of "wealth management," Mossack Fonseca used its influence to write and bend laws worldwide to favour the interests of criminals over a period of decades.

Shell companies are often associated with the crime of tax evasion, but the Panama Papers show beyond a shadow of a doubt that although shell companies are not illegal by definition, they are used to carry out a wide array of serious crimes that go beyond evading taxes".

In a time of coup, as we are living now in Brazil, resulting in an attack on democratic rights, I believe that one of art's tasks is to re-qualify the word "speculation" itself, not only from a poetic approach to capital, but also by getting us thinking about active interferences in institutions and constitutions that we want to change.

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3 <http://panamapapers.sueddeutsche.de/articles/572c897a5632a39742ed34ef/>

# ACTIVATING COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE

## FELIPE DUARTE

After many years of practice in the world of 'collaborative economy,' I could not help but feel a little disappointed.<sup>1</sup> It was a major shock when I realised that, despite the amazing social technologies we have developed and implemented, many of us had never stopped and recognised that our privileges were the actual grounds of our success – and that we were spending our days selling an ideology and seducing people with promises and watchwords that were not appropriately understood by anybody, filled with scattered concepts and even more scattered practices.

As the world started to pay attention to 'collaborative economy,' we observed the shadows and light growing in equal parts. Conflict, competition, gossip and a distinctly dark layer began to reveal themselves. Pointing to it, a cynical beholder could well call into question the entire 'movement.' But the truth is that nothing can de-legitimise the quest, even when faced with all its incongruities.

We already live a networked life. The network is the world. You don't *have* a network, some guy hasn't *founded* a network and, most importantly, by attending a given event you haven't been *building a network*. What we do is work with the possibilities of this networked world, connecting more people in the hope of generating value, happiness, smiles and opportunities to learn for everyone involved – the so called 'network topology' can be changed. The relationship between the points is what makes the system, not only in numbers, but in quality of relationships. Some socially talented people end up being very important in connecting several potential points, harvesting a lot of rewards for this reason, but nonetheless, networks are not things to be owned.

The network and its topology vary in terms of density of connection. They are groups. Clusters are organically formed around subjects, ideas and technologies. Groups of magnetic people are united by a shared purpose, initially stimulating both the flow and the exchange. As these things develop, it is not uncommon to witness the same people manifesting an inclination to control this flow, add a brand to it, and so on. Once we become attentive to this, we don't need to be frustrated or heartbroken by such a common inversion.

Think about how many times over the past few years you have read in the media that, based on 'collaborative' procedures, a new management technology, app, market trend, or social movement was to represent the end of capitalism and the (competitive) world as we know it? That we only need to 'share' and 'collaborate' with our brothers in order to change everything? Such a narrative has remained the same since the days of Jesus Christ, and it is very convincing, although I admit to be a little tired of this messianic trend, always brought up when we try to convey 'collaborative ideas' to the general public. The real wealth is attention, not money. 'Ideologies' – or systems of ideas – need 'clients'. Idea systems can seem financially gratuitous, but end up charging you with the most intimate and valuable thing you have: your manner of thinking, feeling and acting.

In spite of all of this, we evolve. Regarding cooperation and collaboration, we must act systemically. We learn ever more strategies to coordinate people according to their natures and interests, thus diminishing the need of attaining results through hierarchy and oppression. This equips us with courage, curiosity and confidence to

search for new means of living without necessarily 'attacking the system.' Many of the most 'sublime' and 'esoteric' notions currently championed were already present in the thoughts and comments of Goethe, the German poet, thinker and scientist of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. It is of fundamental importance that we understand that we are talking simply about technologies and, as such, they are not inherently 'good', nor 'bad.' Regardless of the ideological system that gave rise to a form of consistently making something, once a technology is understood, it becomes available for everyone. Such is the case of the internet, tantric massage, the atomic bomb and my grandma's secret *moqueca* recipe. She might have concealed some of her tricks, but I learned enough to make a nice *moqueca*. That said, I don't share much of my grandma's ideological system.

Everything is collaborative and cooperative. To call something collaborative, shared or cooperative became a way of distinguishing something from the 'normal, daily, hard, square and unhappy old world.' New world, new science, new politics, new era – whenever a denial of the other polarity becomes necessary, it leaves me with a bitter taste in my mouth. Positive prejudices are as limiting and damaging as the negative ones, and I believe that the seductive usage of such words hinders both learning and dialogue, thus reducing the coefficient of collective intelligence we are able to generate.

We can, indeed, use collaboration and cooperation with systemic intelligence, and thereby rupture the chains of command and control that dehumanise ourselves and drain our will for living. We can become confident enough to allow information and other intangible resources to flow freely and harvest the outcomes of the collective intelligence around us. The more fluid, attentive, perceptive and conscious we are, the more we will manage to turn experience and intuition into insight and action. There are no new atoms, or new kinds of atomic connection, no new essential elements of matter, nor new syllables. Each and every innovation is the product of how we recombine basic elements of matter with our codes and maps in order to broaden our possibilities.

All innovation is a feat of consciousness first. The ideas behind new findings and innovations live inside us. We are their hosts and agents. We cannot ignore that we have an inner side, where the worlds that we consider and conceive as possible, unfold. By constructing and acquiring ideas, whether intellectually or empirically, we act upon these worlds. By communicating and interacting, whether we like it or not, we act upon the inner worlds of others. The way they react to us, in turn, has an impact on our inner worlds. And it is with these collisions of inner worlds that the dynamics of collaboration and cooperation thrive, or indeed fail.

When we act as managers, facilitators or leaders, we do not depend merely on our personal ability to interact with each and every one involved. Collective outcomes depend on the quality of interaction and communication between all the different 'points' in a network. The challenge remains the same in companies, neighbours' meetings or street protests. There is a tension between what we want to happen, and what actually happens. Accepting and flowing is the inevitable polarity of orchestrating, and one cannot be without the other.

[TRANSLATED FROM PORTUGUESE BY DANIEL LÜHMANN]

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1 What follows is an excerpt from "Shifting the Conversation", a longer piece by the author



# WHAT IS LOST IS LOST FOREVER

SUN SIWEI 孙思维

1.

Yin and I were in Namsoo's, a Yunnan restaurant near the Andingmen station, eating mushrooms. It started raining outside again.

"Saturday, right?" Yin asked. "The talk."

"Right." I finished chewing. "Don't know what to expect from it, though."

"How come? I thought you were the guest speaker." said Yin.

"I am." I paused, sipped my tea. "Except that I am only repeating myself on this subject," I continued.

"What's the subject again?" She asked. "Sorry, I forgot."

"The sharing economy," I said. "Too trendy to remember."

A man and a woman came in and took the table opposite ours. While they were getting settled at the table, the man asked the waiter if they could use WeChat to pay the bill. Nodding, the waiter seemed pleased to be asked.

"So, what are you going to say?" Yin asked.

"Oh, well... It's a public event so I think it's surely worthwhile expanding people's take beyond Airbnb and Uber. You see, the media emphasises the 'sharing' component of the phrase while ignoring the 'economy' aspect a lot. That is misleading. Business is also labelling their products under the name of 'sharing', to make it seem progressive, green, and utopian, while the truth is it devolves into business as usual. With many unsolved legal disputes." I continued, "if you look closer, you'll see there's a long history of things like these. But people don't look back very often; they like celebrating new things which are not new at all."

"Right right right. Right." Yin seemed to recall something.



1 1/2.

The current layout of Beijing, in spite of the construction/destruction of the past 50 years, still resonates with the genetic familiarity of its Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), medieval forbearer. The city walls may have been replaced by the similarly restrictive Ring Roads, but its linearity and north-south east-west axes still exert themselves on this ever-expanding annulus. This holds-in the psycho- and social-geography of the city as much as its infrastructural and transportation networks.

In the very last days of my dissertation fieldwork, I often felt drawn to the Tongzi River, and I spent a lot of time, during those months, poking around the part of it that flows around the Forbidden City. I never get tired of looking at it; it hypnotises me. I like to look at it in midsummer, when it is warm and dirty and drowsy, and I like to look at it in February, when it is carrying ice.

In the fieldwork, sometimes my informants lie to me and sometimes they lie to themselves. Sometimes they are wrong about things, sometimes I am missing the context to understand them properly. When things get too much for me, I put a Manga and a couple of sandwiches in my pockets and go down to the Xihuaamen to wander around a bit, watching men waiting, jiggling and catching.

It's getting late. I believe it is time to leave.



2.

"Thanks for the dialogues. I have a question." A member of the audience stood up and asked; "Different classes have different priorities and there are principle contradictions and secondary contradictions. How do we unite middle-class and workers and peasants today? How can we, the intellectuals, be in solidarity with the workers?" The man seemed nervous.

"Which speaker would you like to address this?" The moderator responded.

"The lady," He said.

Oh, poor young man. I thought, "I probably can't say anything about how to approach this question, here." I started answering.

"I accept that this is a really difficult problem, a universal problem." I continued, "part of it, I think, depends upon basic education, in which way people approach their understanding of what man's history is."

"For instance... you need... uh... we need to think about ways to set up the contradiction in unity, rather than divergence, between the political project." I fumbled for words and saw some members of the audience were taking notes.

"There have been... uh... historically, many situations, in which, the kind of unity... that you are seeking... has actually been created," I kept going.

"Generally speaking, strikes in factories are far more successful if it is deep and there is wide community support," I started gathering words.



"There is a struggle, going on in France right now, of the new Labour Law, going on for about three weeks, a month. What is striking about it, is not only that the labourers are involved but there's a great sympathy from the general public. So, it is not impossible; connections can be made." I continued, "and sometimes when connections are made, it is easier to renew them at a later point of time."

I took a sip of water and kept going.

"For example, there are some immigrant rights movements in the United States which are quite strong and have drawn significant public support. And in this regard, some of the right-wing analysts say it is helpful because it enlightens, or animates, some of us who'd otherwise not be engaged, or to become fully-engaged, in this struggle."

"And, here, too, the Brazilian case was one which shows both sides of what you were talking about."

"Initially, this struggle was simply about rising transport costs. Then it spread to very general discontents. Then it spread to questions of police oppression, and that consolidated more people on a radical call. So by the time this whole process began to unfold, many more people were involved, together in the struggle. But on the other side, it also developed disagreement which began to work within that framework of struggle, and finally destroyed it from the inside. This sort of thing is not uncommon. So for me, the only answer I can give is continuous struggle, to try to maintain both theoretical standings on a given situation, and to keep the practical political practice alive. We have not been very successful in recent years, doing that. The only answer is to keep on trying."

Some members of the audience clapped their hands, yet I felt that I should have said "I don't know" in the first place.



3.

Heavy rain hit Beijing last week. The rain continued for more than 40 hours and reports said that flooding had killed many. Uber jokingly replaced its icon of a car with one of a boat on its user interface. A friend texted me saying that he had managed to play Pokemon GO in Xinjiang.

"Thrilled!" He said.

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# HOW I MET MEPHISTOPHELES IN A CO-WORKING SPACE AND ENDED UP IN CHINA

ERIK RODRIGUES

The air is dry, the weather is hot and my back hurts as I carry 20kg in my backpack. I'm at the Beijing Capital International Airport boarding a flight to Brazil after two weeks of intense events, thinking back at how I landed myself in China. Reckless actions and unpredictable outcomes mark the story of how I would meet a mentor, make a friend and part ways with a business partner I could not establish a productive work balance with. This very report of the perceptions is a result of an imperfect collaboration.

By the end of 2013 I would find myself late to a Saturday class, which I had no clue what it was about in an already familiar place that I call home today. I was attending an open curriculum course on a variety of themes, from liberal arts, to quantum physics in a co-working space, which also had an entrepreneurship education branch. On this day I met a strange figure speaking in a rude, yet sophisticated manner, exhibiting art pieces on a screen and questioning a class of a dozen people about the identity of the artists behind the genitalia and industrial landscape paintings. With the patience of a teacher, and the arrogance of an artist to whom discussing art pieces was common knowledge, he would challenge us to guess the personality and story of those artists' lives. My lack of artistic education had me failing in every effort to associate the artist with the right set of characteristics that would make up his personality. After a brief period of time, he explained that to understand an art piece, you have to catch a glimpse of the soul of the artist. All this exercise was about perception. Everything that followed was about perception. Eventually I would come to realise that it has, always, all been about perception, all my life.

Right after his words, the figure picked me out and approached me, and in the same way he would look to the soul of an artist when in contact with an art piece, his eyes stared at my spirit and he perceived my inner conflicts, frustrations, desires but most of all, ambition. I still wonder if my very sight reflected an earlier version of himself. As I looked at his skills and crafts with curiosity and will to learn, he responded with openness.

In the same way that Faust went after Mephistopheles in his search for power in Goethe's poem, I asked the arts teacher about the source of his wisdom and he responded with overwhelming knowledge, revealing the path to his schools of thought and practice. Driven by my curiosity, on my personal quest for power, I delved deeper into his material and read everything I could, always coming back for more. Then again, as the stray poodle that followed Faust around turned out to be a demon, the arts teacher revealed himself to be more than a painter. Our relationship then evolved to a master and apprentice one, where I would learn about the real world narratives of the entrepreneurial life, business, science, art and the crafts of facilitation.

The trickster would eventually play his foul game on me, taking something in exchange for the doors opened and the powers given. Our paths would cross many times in the following years, but in that moment there was still no sign of his counterpart, his prize or his terms on the other side of the contract.

Born on 1 October 1993 I grew up in a middle-class neighbourhood, attended standard schools and never developed any interests in running my own business, studying arts, or self-educating myself. Life's expectancies revolved around graduating from college and applying for a job in the public sphere, achieving financial security and retiring when service was due. Needless to say that this had all been shaped by parental influence, that wasn't to last long. After finishing high school, college played a major role in the course my life took, even though it happened in a non-linear fashion. The free time I had summed up with the unattractiveness of the business management major fostered a positive environment for experimentation, leading



me to the junior enterprise, the city's entrepreneurial social scene and its players, the actors from the micro-economic play of business people, artists and their ego-driven mission statements.

I began to attend a variety of different events, wander through the so-called collaborative spaces, and meet different people which I didn't have access to in the part of town where I lived. This moment of experimentation was crucial for the deconstruction of the paradigm I had been raised with, and with the reckless walk of a fool I left myself open for unexpected findings along the way, such as the encounter with the arts teacher, later master, in the co-working slash alternative school slash my current job that I had met by chance in 2012.

As master and apprentice become friends and both practitioners and students of different arts, our paths cross in each other's projects, find synergies in opportunities of collaboration and a relationship of trust emerges from shared points of view and soft disagreements about the social context we're enrolled in. The narratives and discussions of the social innovation and entrepreneurial sphere of Rio revolved around egoist challenges amongst players, competition on the scarce resources of a state towards bankruptcy and monopoly over cutting-edge social technologies, rather than actual value generation through market activity.

The collective unconscious of the network of entrepreneurs, artists, activists and academics in Rio's collaborative economy ecosystem supported, and was supported by, collaborative spaces in a symbiotic relationship. This community that held clusters of communities within it set the stage for Catete92, a self-organisation experiment that relied on a house without any particular purpose, as a platform for alternative value transactions for the community that grew with(in) it.

I started my own collaborative network initiative in my part of town as well. I felt all the political strife of developing a foreign social technology platform in my territory, unaware that exposing myself as a cultural producer and entrepreneur in some sort of way would put me in conflict with local agents that disputed the throne of social innovation landlord. I found myself psychologically affected by evolving issues and reflected continuously on my whole as a social starter and the very boundaries of activism, entrepreneurship, and politics.

The Catete92 experiment would later come to an end as well, but it was in its last days that the painter, mentor and one of the co-founders of the artistic-start-up like experiment was invited to collaborate in an transnational residency. Former master and apprentice become collaborators in the following stages of the residency, Brazil then China.

As our collaboration went on, I began to feel the struggle of handling simultaneously a full-time job in the co-working space where I hacked my own education, a part-time job with managerial work in a youth leadership development project in Rio's suburbs, and the latest invitation to work as a researcher in the residency. Choosing an alternative path to live meant embracing every opportunity I could and the money-time-energy bottom line was to be wisely taken care of. The trade-off involved maintaining financial security while saving energy to engage myself in the invitation to the artistic project, but it was impossible to please all three friends, employers and projects with success.

Being born in a middle-class family sustained by parents that work for the government represents stability in times where the government is stable, but social security can turn to desperation when the state and country begin to go downhill in the worst crisis of the last two decades. With my parents wages halved, I had to

put my energy and time into the short-term rewarding projects, and this meant that all my 'leftover' time and energy would serve the residency. Commitment failures and expectancy dis-alignments harmed my relationship with my collaborators and the outcomes of the project themselves. What should be a horizontal, self-organised team, turned into a conflict-ridden organisation for me? It is as clear as crystal now, but it wasn't only my monetary-drive and lack of energy and time to put efforts into the artistic collaboration that led me to this sequence of failures.

During the Brazilian residency, we developed a facilitated workshop on Goethe's phenomenological approach inspired by Goethe's poem, Faust. We explored the phenomena of the relationships of merit, power and privilege in the microcosm of a diverse audience with different, sometimes conflicting points of view. During these three days we immersed ourselves and our bias in investigating how grassroots movements turned into pyramidal empires. The soul of those interactions staged at Vila Iitororó would reflect the same effects in the macrocosm, from start-ups with libertarian dreams born from garages in city suburbs, that then become profit-driven corporations, to political revolutions that would betray their very mission when placed in the position of power.



The facilitation experience helped me not only research the phenomena under investigation, but also revealed critical insights about my struggle in collaborating with the team. Besides my failed attempts to deliver results, I had also become in-

visible and lacked autonomy when put together with my former mentor. I perceived that the mentor-student relationship had not disappeared when it had shifted to a co-worker-co-worker configuration, meaning that when next to him, I would become a passive listener and task taker, rather than an autonomous collaborator. My own behaviour collapsed the horizontality of the team and I ended up following designs led by him in most of the research, even in this report.

As the fractal from Goethe's holistic science, the practice in the workshop was contained in the whole process of collaboration in the residency, and the phenomena of self-suppression, when put next to a high-skilled and dominant personality collaborator, that previously occupied a top tier hierarchical relationship to me, was revealed equally in the part (workshop) and whole (residency). After all, the contract with Mephistopheles took its toll on me when curiosity and the thirst for knowledge left me paralysed by the master's voice. The short-term reward for power may have closed doors that had taken long-term effort and care to open, the trickster never leaves empty-handed and the phenomena lives on.

The fractal in the Catete92 experiment may also be true. The unpredictability of random interactions with unexpected results in un-mediated collaborative spaces can eventually create bonds between people and take strangers to China.

**ERIK RODRIGUES** is currently pioneering a neighbourhood mobilisation platform (Meier +) and co-creating development projects in North Zone Rio. He is also working as the facilitator of the Ação project in Chácara do Céu Favela. His efforts are in civic engagement





# AN UNDERGROUND MIDDLE PATH. HOW DOES A SOCIAL INITIATIVE TEST COMMERCIAL RULE AND THE COMMON GOOD?

CHEN YIMING 陈奕名

The Digua Shequ 地瓜社区 community centre is a city basement renovation project initiated by Zhou Zishu 周子书. Two floors below the street, the basement was once a bomb shelter designed to withstand wartime air raids, before later becoming residential. Due to safety concerns, the residents of these basements, of which the majority are today migrant workers, have been asked by the authorities to move out. However, because of the complex dynamics between landlords, tenants, community committees and local governments, so far only a third of the evacuation plans have actually been carried out in Beijing. The remaining underground communities have become a source of social stratification, separating themselves from the others who live above the ground. Reconstructing public space in these communities, and breaking through the social barrier between the two sides, is one of the most valuable objectives of the *Digua Shequ*.

## RESEARCHING THE LONG-LOST "COMMUNITY" IN CHINA

The name, *Digua*, originated from Zhou Zishu's personal experience when he arrived in Beijing ten years ago: as his friend arrived to pick him up from the station, he handed him a steaming hot sweet potato, or *digua* in Chinese. Years later, Zhou can still recall this emotional moment, which has become the foundational idea of his initiative; to create and to share. Membership-run, the renovated basement is a public space where one can rest and read, as well as utilise exclusive workshop spaces for an hourly fee. So far, the programme includes a barber's shop, a gym, and classrooms where one can learn English, play LEGO, or use 3D-printing machines.



Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari described the philosophical concept of "rhizome" as a model of culture that is characterised by ceaselessly establishing connections between organisations and effortlessly enabling every social unit to be a source of initiative, for a "rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, inter-being, intermezzo". The *Digua* employs commercial rules and separates the compartments into functionally diverse 'apps'. The *Digua* team thus has to find the real needs of the residents in order to give life to their project.

The basic, free public areas such as a library, a reading room and a kids zone are being developed in many advanced community management centres. The charging programmes however provide more specialist services, with the aim of increasing the engagement of the members. These programmes are not standardised, but designed for the specific community. At the same time, these programmes also represent a more commercial aspect which transcends differences between social classes, making such projects attractive and pragmatic to both underground, and on-the-ground, residents.

## EMPOWERMENT RATHER THAN INTERVENTION

Of course, there is no guarantee that the *Digua* project will accomplish everything that it sets out to do, especially given the many difficulties it faces. With the great demand for service workers in Beijing, due to the process of urbanisation, previously marginalised migrant workers will inevitably become a part of the urban life in a way that can no longer be denied and basements will likely become the centre of their social life. Zhou's research focuses on "the life of one million residents in 17 thousand basements in Beijing" and "Re-empowerment" is the research subject of his master thesis. The real challenge that *Digua Shequ* faces is indeed the very operationalisation of this idea.

As Zhou affirms, the basement in Beijing is a space that is occupied by heterogeneity – a '*heterotopia*' in Foucault's words. It exists in the ever-changing course of history and is itself a superposition of ecological, economic, political and ethical processes. This leads me to ask if it would be possible to empower all related players by utilising the basement? Like a social experiment, can we use this space to build social capital and finally realise spatial justice?

Initially, I was dubious about the concept of 'justice' in this context because interventional projects like this are usually considered as an imposition of imaginary 'justice' to/for the target population. It is for this reason that I have written in the past in opposition to 'social interventional art', arguing that these projects enforce a pre-determined 'justice' in the name of art and are usually obsessed with reconstruction that is largely irrelevant to the actual needs of the communities.

However, *Digua Shequ*, is not defined to be anything specific, but rather, as Zhou states, it is open to possibilities. In addition, *Digua*

*Shequ* places an emphasis on the engagement of the community, rather than intervention, along the same lines as Michael Herzfeld's 'engaged anthropology'. In fact, a major benefit of the introduction of this engagement principle is that it keeps the project open and flexible, allowing for the rules to change and be rebuilt. At the beginning, *Digua Shequ* was free for a period of time, but they found that many participants joined simply for the free food and other perks. Welfare is not another word for a free lunch. I can see two ways to build rules for public good: religion and commerce.

Apparently, *Digua Shequ* adheres better to the latter. It is essential to build rules first in order to rebuild public space in a semi-gated community of 7,000 people (strictly speaking, most of the communities in China are not really 'communities' but are merely residential areas without meaningful public space). Many charities in China are in the habit of giving one-off material aid in carnival-like events, but never find a way to 'teach a man to fish'. In the long term, it does not really matter how much aid has been provided if new rules, or strategies, are not created and built. Many community intervention projects also fall into the same trap.

This is indeed reminiscent of the argument of Muhammad Yunus, the so-called 'banker to the poor', who does not provide aid, but micro-finance, to the poor. This, he argues, motivates people to find business opportunities, based on rules. Similarly in gated communities in China, it seems to me that the best way to break social stratification is commerce, since "everyone is equal when they consume". This is not consumerism, but reasonable satisfaction of daily needs. And it might be worth a try.

The executors of social intervention projects must not see themselves as 'givers', which implies difference between social classes. According to religion, all people are equal in front of God, and this is as much the case in the sphere of consumption. From my perspective, these are the only two situations in which true empowerment is possible, and privileges are not 'given', but realised, under the same rules.

Today, middle class communities are successfully connected to public space through community committees, real estate management and autonomously. But in many older, semi-open communities, such as is the case where the *Digua* is based, there is social stratification between underground and on-the-ground, local and non-local, old people and young people. This is a vertical margin of the city, and a prism of contemporary urban life in China. *Digua Shequ*, as one of the first projects to attempt 'dis-identification', gives theoretical value to this social work methodology in China.



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# CTRL – RETHINKING CULTURAL ASSETS, DE-CAPITALISING INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY. A NEW COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO THE MUSIC MARKET

## MARGHERITA D'ANDREA AND CORRADO GEMINI

Summer 2016: the heat is oppressive as you book your house by the sea on Airbnb. You managed to organise seven special days of holiday.

After having filled all the places in the car with passengers who will share the cost of the journey with you, thanks to BlaBlaCar, you rush to prepare dinner for the Norwegian who's passing through and will stay in your house next week while you're away.

Yesterday you published on Spotify and iTunes your most recent album: you quickly check the feedback as your manager calls you. "Are you leaving? The vinyls on BigCartel are selling fast, and the new track is at number four on Beatport! Remember, finish off those last two tracks of the album by next week, because then you'll be starting work again and you won't have any more time!"

Suddenly a thought comes to mind and you turn to stone.

"I've got such an incredible amount of tools that make possible this horizontal type of economy, putting me in contact and allowing me to work directly with others like me, with the same interests in common, in an environment in which, however, I've got no way of *going beyond*."

The decision processes behind these tools, that have taken life thanks to my own use, are in fact completely beyond my control.

## RED PILL OR BLUE PILL?

**RED PILL:** tomorrow you wake up and you continue to believe that the management of work and economic dynamics will always be beyond your reach.

You stop asking yourself why you cannot self-organise, despite the fact that today you have the tools to do so, and you continue to be a user, client and consumer for the service companies managed by others.

You life continues in a position of subordination, as you have known your whole life up until now.

If then you are the front-person of Portishead, and you receive an annual pay from streaming, you think the problem is music being sold at a low price, and you get annoyed<sup>1</sup>.

**BLUE PILL:** you take control of the tools you have at your disposal. You found a cooperative in which all the members have the same power, and together, on equal-footing, you manage these tools, deciding the releases, optimising the streams, constantly working to break down the barriers between providers and clients, between management and use, between administrator and employee.

Your life changes radically: it is now characterised by a diffused responsibility within the sector in which you participate, and within a community in which you collaborate, equipped with shared means and shared tools.

These experiences make you re-think not only your professional position within the market, but indeed the whole idea of what work is.

Right now, the blue pill is the challenge that is stirring a global community of producers of art, culture and performance, who have up until now always been subjugated to their respective industries.

The collective ownership and management of the platforms of production, distribution, and cooperation in general, is the way to create a cultural sector in which there is an equal relationship between practitioner and user. At this historical moment in time we can see the possibility to concretely realise a different way, thanks to new technological tools, as well as the will to change that the crisis of recent years has generated, it is a burning question more now than ever before.

To focus on the music market, which is indeed the most monopolised cultural sector of all, with just three companies controlling 70% of the world market, we can see that the evolution of production tools and the arrival of online platforms have with time led to a complete liquidisation of the sector linked to an (old) industrial model.

From a rigid system of roles, we are moving towards a model in which practitioners have multiple roles: today it is not easy to find a record company which does not also deal in organising tours for their artists, a radio that does not organise festivals, or a label that does not also take care of merchandising.

A market which needs to simplify necessarily means also a reduction in the number of intermediary positions: we are living through a huge liquidisation fixed on beating prices down, and the figures in power within the old system are trying to survive by maintaining as much of the market shares as possible.

Production costs have fallen and workstations are evermore available, to the point that recording studios are being used only for the final phases of recording for an album. Distribution has also been revolutionised by the liquidisation of music: the physical media (CDs and vinyl) have become collector items, while everyday music is accessed via private streaming platforms (Spotify/YouTube), which have lowered the profits that artists can get from selling their music. Communication and promotion have radically distanced themselves from their traditional professional sectors with the explosion of global social networks and large aggregators (Facebook/Soundcloud), reaching out directly from the hands of the artists or their collaborators.

The diminishing of distance between the author and the public facilitated by social networks has led to financing straight from the supporter to the artist. As of today platforms such as MusicRaiser represent an important part of the budget in the sustainability of many artists, from the independent circuit to the mainstream (an Australian metal group asked their fans to give them an annual work pay through a crowdfunding campaign<sup>2</sup>).

The picture is pretty clear. The application of a virtuous model based on the common ownership of a platform by the authors and other practitioners works in this unprecedented moment of the market: relational fluidity, direct contact with the public, lowering of costs, equity in redistribution, improving the quality of production, the diffusion of culture outside of, or beyond, the logic of capitalism.

Right before our eyes there stands a new model for the music market, completely different to the industrial model, it is just up until now we had not really noticed.

CTRL has the aim of drawing attention to this new model and practising it through the cooperation of authors and other practitioners within the same legal body, as well as through an online platform.

By using de-centralised administration technologies (Blockchain) and digital democracy, a fluid market environment can be managed based on collective agreements, while in a constant process of revision of the governance that regulates it.

But that is not all.

## MAKE MUSIC FREE

Another step forward to be made to bring about this change however, without which it is not possible to realise real horizontality, is the analysis of the current management model of Authors' rights, on a legal level and within the market.

Intellectual property and the classification of goods according to the criteria of rivalry and excludability, as laid down in economic theory, simple are not a correct equation.

Music, by its very nature, is not based on rivalry or exclusivity; the listening to of a track by one individual does not limit the possibility for others to also enjoy it. Indeed, it is the opposite. When one listens to music, others are exposed, forming new audiences and interest. The creation grows in proportion with its diffusion.

This concept is a common development in the artistic expressions of musicians who increasingly work together, especially in digital media, and in some modern non-Western societies which are culturally connected to the idea of natural, collective artistic creation. It is an idea also shared in areas where tradition still plays a central role, and the concept of the public domain of the immaterial is as common as it is considered essential in the transmission and development of local arts and culture.

The idea of the individual appropriation of artistic creations was unknown in certain parts of South Africa and Brazil before the first arrivals of the new colonisers, the Western multinationals indirectly responsible for the 'Free Trade Agreements', which saw the arrival of a new kind of development from the 1990s onwards.

Following the global logic of the rule 'one law fits all', these agreements focused on constructing a national and international rules system regarding intellectual property, based on the standards of the most economically advanced countries.

This led to the establishment of the TRIPS (Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights) in 1994, designed to regulate aspects of intellectual property rights relating to trade, whilst also encouraging *ad hoc* legislation and penalty systems in countries where they did not already exist.

Article 63 of the Agreement exemplifies a typically commercial understanding of music; it is a tool for the accumulation (long-term or indefinitely) of repertoires, with restrictive effects on the circulation and distribution of works. The article in fact refers to the resolution procedures for disputes which are already built into the WTO: an example of a rule able to exclude completely, or in part, national jurisdictions, leaving it to the International Arbitration Court to resolve disputes and interpret all the agreements that fall within the area of copyright.

From an economic-political perspective, such a model (which today sees the TTIP negotiating other fundamental building blocks) imposed significant historical changes: domestic courts lost many of their powers; there was the submission of power/duty regarding copyright laws to an arbitration control greatly influenced by the voices of the *majors*; there was a freezing of the autonomous power to legislate (called the 'Regulatory chill effect') by individual States who wanted to make reform in the area, to point which there were real sanction and compensation procedures for those States which had legal provisions that were not uniform and did not conform, which could thus be potentially harmful in terms of foreign royalties, held by the same multinationals.

Such a stubborn operation of control is evidently due to an awareness of a danger at its theoretical core. Indeed, as Jessica Litman wrote in her article 'The Public Domain', "it is our inability to trace or verify the lineage of ideas that makes it essential that they be preserved in the public domain"<sup>3</sup>.

Authors' rights were born with the intention of allowing the sharing of artistic creation while safeguarding at the same time the individual rights of the authors. They were not created to be used as a dividable, marketable token which aims to capitalise on repertoires, time after time.

The accumulation of vast repertoires by record companies through buying Authors' rights contractually, added to the copyright law that has always been in the hands of the big companies, and the continued rise in temporal terms of protection of the work, all come together to paint a worrying picture for the future, in which there

will no longer be any source of culture truly in the public domain, with disastrous consequences that are not difficult to imagine.

The current system seems to be more interested, however, in protecting the rights of the large intermediaries, as the cases of Sixto Rodriguez testify (see the Oscar award-winning documentary 'Searching for Sugar Man'), as well as many of the recent cases that have plagued platforms such as SoundCloud. The solution can only be radical.

It is necessary to re-think and re-construct not only the evermore physically-free modes of production and distribution, but also the way in which we protect those rights, that must take into account the opportunities that new tools can give us, both in terms of the growth of collective consciousness, as well as in terms of productive resources and relational networks.

In this sense, thanks to their modularity and adaptability, the Creative Commons licenses feed a virtuous system because they define a space for sharing and global use in a network of potentially infinite knowledge.

Paul Krugman, in an interview by the New York Times in 2008, said, "bit by bit, everything that can be digitized will be digitized, making intellectual property ever easier to copy and ever harder to sell for more than a nominal price. And we'll have to find business and economic models that take this reality into account"<sup>5</sup>.

Only by returning to a more mutualist, and less competitive, conception of Authors' rights, or by de-merchandising and undoing the closed logic of copyright, will it really be possible to give life to the change we want to see.

The great challenge that Creative Commons are called to work on in the whole system of music production is precisely that of being able to have a real impact on the market, and the way to do it is to build, on an international level, a collective body which deals with the safeguarding and management of Authors' rights, for those who choose to use these licenses.

The creation and promotion of a Collecting Society based on the Creative Commons licenses, managed directly by the authors, is for this reason another fundamental aim of CTRL.

CTRL is a process born from the very particular context of Italy, which has facilitated its conception and is accelerating its realisation through networks of workers and activists. The short-term objectives are the opening of a production cooperative and the development of a web platform, as well as initiating the construction of a collecting society.

But this is an operation that involves the music market as a whole, and it is only with a solid base of theoretical and practical international cooperation that we can make real changes: researchers, economists, lawyers, activists, foundations, politicians, authors and workers in the market that are interested in contributing to this new pathway are invited to get in touch with the project developers and get involved in its active construction.

[TRANSLATED FROM ITALIAN BY SALLY JANE HOLE]

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1 <https://twitter.com/jetfury/status/587744520403607552>  
2 <https://www.patreon.com/neobliviscaris>  
3 [https://www.wto.org/english/docs\\_e/legal\\_e/27-trips.pdf](https://www.wto.org/english/docs_e/legal_e/27-trips.pdf)  
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# NEW FORMS OF PROXIMITY. HACKING THE BORDERS BETWEEN THE LOCAL AND THE GLOBAL

## INDY JOHAR INTERVIEWED BY NOEL HATCH

**NOEL HATCH (NH): A lot of people talk about the civic economy. What are the core values that you would say embody it?**

INDY JOHAR (IJ): For me, the core values are a transition from a kind of an idea of “business to business” or “business to customer” economy to a “citizen to citizen” economy. In a way, it’s not about the legal form, it’s about the relationship system that it’s operating in, and that’s the fundamental shift.

It’s really about going from corporate and representative engagement to relational engagement. That to me is a central part of pretty much any successful civic economic project.

Why we don’t use the word “society” is because I think we need to address the word “economy” and re-frame it, away from a discourse about finance and corporates, to a citizen economic perspective. That, to me, is a defining feature. It’s a behavioural feature as opposed to an organisational feature.

**NH: It’s interesting that you talked about moving to relational engagement and not wanting to use the word “society”. From an economic perspective, relations will be seen more as transactions. What are the ways we can protect the relational institutions, like families, neighbours or social networks, when they are confronted with the economy, which is guided by different interests and ways of doing things?**

IJ: Maybe there’s a different way of framing that. How about we don’t pitch one against the other? How about we try and merge the economy and society?

I think the distinction between the two is a post-enlightenment feature, and its distinction is perhaps the cause of many of the issues we face.

All good businesses and systems operate as relational economies. We just weren’t able to capture the data. I think that’s where there is a revolution going on. There are much broader proxies of data than money. Once we move beyond money as the only true data set, as the only currency of analysis, we’ll get a much richer feel, blurring the boundary between society and economy to create a more ethical system. That’s one aspect. The second aspect, which is perhaps even more important, is how you utilise that.

The blurring of society and economy is instrumentalised by corporate and top-down systems as a system of abuse.

Slavery is an example of that, in an extreme sense. Currently, we have the idea of freedom at home, and instrumentalisation at work. You blur the two with a top-down system and that’s psychological enslavement.

So what you have to do, when you talk about the blurring, is to talk about the structural democratisation of the system itself, so the blurring is healthy, rather than destructive.

**NH: You talked about the “last mile” economy – the open, social, long economy. When we’re talking about relations, how do you support and stimulate people to use those spaces – whether it’s the corner shop or the urban farms – which are all around them and the closest form of economy they’ve got? How do you encourage people to spend their money and even get involved in those economies?**

IJ: I think people are doing it naturally. Corporate systems control who tweets, while civic systems are built by people who are socially engaged. Corporates are controlled by nodes of behaviour, so they have templates of behaviour, whereas genuinely civic systems engage in different ways.

As we build global platforms to allow the relational economy to accelerate, I think those bases which were corporate will die. Corporates have had the power to control a diversity of supply chains.

Those advantages are being undermined as the relational economy gets stronger. That’s a natural cycle that we’re going through. What it requires is deep impact.

There’s a real challenge of reinventing something as simple as the corner shop. I think we have to start re-framing ourselves, away from this high-growth addiction narrative, towards real material value. That’s the reason that it’s not happening as much.

**NH: Is it because those examples aren’t being analysed, or is it that the motivations, particularly of young people, is that for the skills and expectations they’ve got, the corner shop isn’t perceived to meet their needs, whether in terms of money, status or fulfilment? In other words, they’d rather use their technical or social skills to help build the next Facebook?**

IJ: The reality is Facebook is one in a 1,000 of ideas developed. We live in a “pop star economy”. It’s one of the last vestiges of the in-

dustrial system, because in an apex system, that’s where you have a pyramid and you have a floating possibility.

We’ve moved from the industrial pyramidal system where everything’s floating just out of reach of everyone. I think that’s the last vestiges of how reputation is accrued through media cycles.

As you democratise media and make it user-centric, these pop star dreams become less and less relevant, because your social networks validate you in a completely different way. And they’re user-defined, rather than broadcast-defined. You’ll see the death of the magical pop star economy, as a psychological entity.

**NH: As these different shifts are happening, what is it that can help people creep through the cracks of the current system without being hit by the collateral damage that comes with it? Some people may still believe some of those myths. What happens in those transitions and how do they build resilience to move through those shifts?**

IJ: It’s difficult. In a macro-economic sense, you could argue that the state has been trying to do that. The state has been the buffer trying to stop the fundamental collapse of the economy and it’s trying to prop up the system, which has probably avoided disaster for many people at the bottom. So, in some sense, the state is trying to create a buffer zone.

I was more hopeful that state policies wouldn’t just create buffers but would create a transition zone. I believe this less now given that the financial economy – which is a layered economy – has so much power over that of the needs of the real economy. They’ve polluted each other.

I’m more nervous now. We’re trying to buffer the moment, in the hope that the system will continue, rather than bring about the more fundamental changes in the structural economy.

**NH: Tell me more about this transition zone. What would that look like? If the state can’t or won’t take on that role, what other actors might do so?**

IJ: We need to democratise finance. We missed an opportunity with the banks. It was probably one of the biggest disasters we missed. No bank has been prosecuted, and in a sense, unless you build democratic finance, you can’t shift the game. There are really interesting examples around that.

We need to actually reorganise cooperatives and make them digitally useful. Currently they are archaic systems, nobody’s really reinventing the organisational form. Current organisational forms are archaic and they’re unable to change our daily behaviours, regenerate support and co-create conversations, provocations to your questions and so on.

We haven’t built the organisational form for this economic liquidity, for that kind of shift. We’ve not built the human capabilities of what this requires – a personal comprehension of generosity and abundance.

We’ve not built the institutional infrastructure. We haven’t built the fluid 21<sup>st</sup> Century institutions and the systemic institutional reform that goes with it.

We’ve allowed the sharing economy to become a casual misappropriation of the term “fractional rent” and “sharing”. Sharing is fundamentally a citizen asset relationship, which means we retain the democracy of wealth, whereas fractional rent is not. So I think we’re just not being institutionally innovative about creating this transition economy.

**NH: There seems to be a compartmentalisation between different forms of globalisation. Globalisation of connections and technology seems to be perceived as benign and generally positive. Globalisation of trade however, is often pitched against the localisation of economies. The globalisation of**

**different cultures creates diversity, but is also perceived as creating conflict. Because of these different compartmentalisations, there seems to be an ambiguous relationship between the civic economy and globalisation. How does the civic economy interact with globalisation?**

IJ: I don’t agree with this idea of the local and the global. This is a false neo-medieval vision, which has been propagated by a 1970s view of the world. It’s one of those illusions.

What we’re moving towards is a proximity economy. Proximity is more than just a narrow view of localism. Proximity is about proximity-driven by platforms, which tells stories of shared purpose systems.

It’s a much broader field than the narrowness of “love thy neighbour”, which I think is a very parochial perspective. I think that when you look at a proximity-driven future, rather than a local or global future, you start to move away from a local versus global perspective, to a citizen to citizen relationship that can be built at a global level. Globalisation is a fourth generation scenario for me, it isn’t globalisation by the centre, but a globalisation at an associative level, whether that’s the Fab Labs or the Global Hub Network.

This is another form of globalisation where democracy of finance, democracy of ownership and democracy of design and production is fundamentally embedded in the system, rather than in the state or a multinational.

The polarity of global and local is a false paradigm. If you look at how systems are generating themselves, they’re starting to reconcile proximity and the global in a much more fundamental way. It’s absolutely consistent with the relational economy.

**NH: It’s interesting that you talk about proximity, because for many young people growing up, they can really relate to that in an instinctive way, whether they’re connecting with someone in China or India. Does that translate into economic and social behaviours?**

IJ: They are first and foremost empathetic behaviours. Once you get four kids in four corners of the world playing Dungeons and Dragons, you create an empathy engine. It’s the ability to put the relational at the centre of the story.

In a sense, I hate the word “proximity”. It’s an ugly word, but it tells the story of where we are at a human level, rather than trying to fetishise a beautiful old English village and their local farm where everyone knows the farmer. We know all about the “tyranny of community”, and at the centre of that is the “tyranny of control”.

Nobody talks about why we really choose to live in London. It’s because we love the anonymity. We love the liquidity of systems, as well as the feeling of proximity. We mustn’t lose some of the real value that we’ve built in our world, and the freedom to reinvent. The freedom of anonymity is very powerful.

**NH: Politics likes to see things in terms of hierarchies, but also in terms of centres, that people might congregate around. There might be different sets of pyramidal structures that overlay each other, like the European Union. Then you’ve got a lot of people that are connecting across, and around, those pyramids.**

**Proximity to them isn’t positioning themselves within a particular pyramid, but to thread connections around and across them. Physically, the threads tied across the pyramids could loosen up and away from it, or they could pull all the pyramids down.**

**Is there a need to ignore the traditional system of liberal democracy and work more on democratising the tools of proximity?**

IJ: We’ve been sold a pup. The vote is merely a totem of democracy. We believe it’s democracy, but it’s not. It is merely the cherry on the icing of the cake.



Democracy exists in many ways. In a sense, the democracy of economics is much more fundamental. If we look at the history of enfranchisement, the public libraries were built before we got the vote. If you look at it from a system-growing perspective, whether it was conscious or not, the democratisation of knowledge pre-dates the democratisation of the vote. Otherwise you'd have had the tyranny of the mob.

We're at the same scale of enfranchisement now. We have to democratise consciousness. I don't mean consciousness in the flowery hippy sense. I mean systems consciousness that can only happen if we build the feedback loops for people to be aware of the systems they operate in.

There is a groundswell already. These are all legitimate forms of democracy. We were sold a pup when we thought our tool of democracy was the vote. That's also been the problem of everything we've tried to do with our current imperial behaviours in democracy: go and give people the vote.

Democracy was built by democratising finance and democratising participation. Building the middle classes is fundamentally correlated with democracy, because you have to create an inclusive middle before you can get systems to work. These are much more fundamental.

The demise of democracy is the complete destruction of the middle classes, of pathways to social equality, of the de-democratisation of finance. It's a systematic destruction and the vote as the only tool of democracy is an illusion.

When politicians say people aren't voting, that's because people aren't stupid. They realise it's an irrelevant system. The vote is not the tool of democracy.

Through proximity, people can see that from other cultures they might currently be buying goods which have globalised supply chains. The power of proximity is that you can transnationalise that consciousness. Coming out of your own culture helps you look back at it in a better way, but also create new supply chains.

It's an asymmetric relationship, what you are starting to see. Traditionally, it has been top-down rather than associative. No-one has really built an open project planning tool. What I mean by project planning is where you define purpose to allow people to associate to the activity that is taking place. Nobody has built that social organising infrastructure. That's where we're heading. That to me is really exciting.

**NH: We're both involved in transnational forms of collaboration. What are the challenges we need to set ourselves in order to develop better infrastructure for working across borders?**

IJ: My biggest problem is that we've not found the right tools for this yet. The Global Hub Network ([www.impacthub.net](http://www.impacthub.net)) brings together around 60 Hubs which are functioning systems in their own right around the

world. We haven't found a means of governance that is truly cooperative. We haven't found a means of cooperative strategy making.

I don't believe in "open space". I'll be really straightforward, it's a great kindergarten tool but it doesn't deal with the complex realities, buried information and deep connections. Open space assumes the discreetness of things, but the reality is that there is no discrete thing in itself, there are interdependencies between them, whether it is capital, power or relationships.

Unless you can bring those complex systems together it's very difficult. I don't think we have the tools to do that. We're fundamentally at the glass ceiling of participation. When you can't do collaborative governance and you can't do collaborative strategy, you create *de facto* bureaucracy, your power blocks. So that's where the problem lies right now.

**NH: What might be the ways to tackle that?**

IJ: You have to move towards a protocol-based system rather than governance. You have to move towards protocols. Effectively, writing a TCP/IP of units and having an "open hardware" and "open chapter" approach. Then, what you define is to only associate around the redefinition of protocols. You allow the core protocols to be additive and varied, to allow for an ecosystem of divergent systems, but with a shared central behaviour. Those are upgraded at a lower rate than the innovation.

That's basically my intuition. Open hardware is about collective systems, not just technology (i.e. Open Desk, Civic Systems Lab, etc.) with a shared protocol system, which is about sharing what you declare to the public, and moving it away from a centralising system. You create a "platform architecture".

I believe that's the only way you can do it without creating a whole new pseudo-bureaucracy.

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# THE WAY OF THE MARGINS

JULIJANA NICHÄ

OVERVIEW FROM  
THE RESIDENCIES  
IN BRAZIL AND CHINA

The institutionalisation of culture is a gradual process of negotiation between the needs of civil society and the political strategies of governments. Recent historical developments in cultural policies present different paces of spatial development. A common feature of the development of cultural policies is their relation to marginalised cultural groups. Marginality is put at the forefront when it is identified as different from the norm, or, in other words, when attention to the different is put before everything else. The embodied transformations between the centre and the margin reflect each other constructively. Due to different socio-economic factors, such as the economic crisis, formal and informal institutions operating in the margins have opened up their methodologies, which were previously centred on the individual, to the collective, leading to their engagement with the concept of the commons. Collective resource allocation and distribution, as well as innovative practices for common security, are increasing across the world.

In China it is only in certain regions of the country, particularly in certain cities, that the economic potential of the cultural industries has started to be recognised. In Brazil, however, there is a hybrid development of cultural policies. Brazil offers a successful example of inclusive policies and common practices, but at the same time internal institutional contradictions complicate the implementation of these policies. Historically, cultural policies targeted elite art; an ar-

gument which could still be made today, in the case of China. Thus, the State created marginal social groups whose culture was subordinated. In the case of Brazil, the early 2000s brought a paradigmatic shift, with the institutional inclusion of historically excluded groups, such as traditional cultures and LGBT groups. The Cultura Viva policy and its programme Points of Culture, although heavily criticised for its over-bureaucratisation, brought about the discursive inclusion of certain marginalised cultural groups in Brazil. Moreover, due to collective forums, such as the Council of Culture, civil society has had greater means of integrating their ideas and methodologies into public policies. Interestingly in China, most contemporary artists engage much more with social activism and criticism than academic intellectuals. There, the 1980s and 1990s were very exciting years for contemporary art, but in the latter years art has become more mainstream.

This research draws from examples of cultural organisations, social movements and individual artists in order to close the gap between 'us' and 'the other'. It explores the cultural public policies in Brazil and China and their implementation and engagement by civil society, which is one-dimensionally defined as marginalised. Relevant groups and individuals were interviewed from the three residencies, giving examples of the various narratives which have been formulated around the idea of marginality.



## WE CONSTRUCT THE CENTRE

The understanding of marginality that most of the interviewees identified with was the concept as defined by the Brazilian artist and researcher Brígida Campbell<sup>1</sup>. She stated that the definition of the marginal defines the centre. In other words, it is the discourse which constructs ‘the other’ which in turn shapes the image of the norm<sup>2</sup>. Consequently, she argues that one should avoid using the term marginality because by using it, one encourages and reproduces the imagined norm.

The activists involved with the feminist movement Ocupação Tina Martins from Brazil, and the Regional Labour Union of Jinzhan Township from China, both identified with this understanding of marginality. Both are grassroots activities which, after failed political promises, self-organised to realise their work.



Ocupação Tina Martins started in February 2016, in response to the Government’s promises to open a shelter and protection services for single mothers and women who had been victims of domestic violence<sup>3</sup>. Groups of feminist activists and artists from Belo Horizonte occupied an abandoned Government building. The occupation was led by the feminist movement Olga Benário, which draws from historical events and figures resisting institutionalised oppression<sup>4</sup>. Their marginalisation was twofold; on both a social and institutional level. Brazilian society is founded on patriarchal ideals, which through history has meant that women have been excluded from protection laws, equal employment rights, and so on. The current institutional set-up further facilitates this gender injustice, by not providing sound laws and regulations. For these reasons, the Ocupação Tina Martins decided to take things into their own hands, seeking to implement that which public policies had failed to do. In their eyes, being treated as ‘the other’ is not acceptable because they do not want to be ‘in the centre’, because being in the centre is where the margins are thus created.

Similarly, the Regional Labour Union of Jinzhan Township did not identify with the concept, because they see themselves as the driving force of China’s infrastructural development<sup>5</sup>. They argued



that the spatial understanding of the margins, living outside of the city centre, is not applicable because it is indeed the rural, peripheral migrant workers who literally construct the centre. The NGO was formed in 2005 by labour workers who had migrated to Beijing as a result of the Government’s demand for labour in the big cities. Initiated by just three individuals, it quickly attracted the attention of many others. The union started providing education, and collaborative and living space for itself. Currently, the centre of the Regional Labour Union of Jinzhan Township hosts the only museum dedicated to the worker in China.

The failure of Chinese migrant policy can be said to largely lie in the logic behind the personal identification card. This ID card has meant that people are entitled to social security, medical assistance



and education only in the district where they were born. When the Chinese Government strongly encouraged city-migration, it failed to change this law, effectively blocking these basic social rights for migrant workers. Facing these difficulties, migrant workers organised themselves, creating schools and collaboration spaces where, in fact, they are the ones implementing policies which indeed the Government should be responsible for.

## THE MARGINS ARE A SPACE FOR SELF-IDENTIFICATION

The second overall understanding of marginality has been defined by Beijing-based artist Krish Raghav, who argues that it is preferable and necessary to operate in the margins, because the power relations between the State and civil society is top-down. This definition reflects successful and failed cultural public policies across the three contexts. In Brazil, certain policies, such as Cultura Viva, have recognised the social importance of traditional cultures, of the historically marginalised and institutionally excluded, through a homogeneous implementation of federal policies. In China, cultural policies seem to be more heterogeneous, depending on the space. Citing his experience as a cultural producer, Krish explains how the Shanghai regional government is more open to cultural public events than the regional government in Beijing, which is very strict in its organisation of public events. For this reason, operating in the margins is always a neutral zone that escapes total social exclusion, and total social integration, creating another space for self-identification. Espaço Commun Luiz Estrela and Art22 are examples of this conceptualisation, challenging the top-down discourse.

Espaço Commun Luiz Estrela is a communal space in an occupied building abandoned after the Second World War<sup>6</sup>. With the occupation, different individuals and groups gathered together to legitimise their common ownership. Later, they received governmental permission to operate in the space for 20 years as a cultural centre. For the community which runs the space, the idea of marginality is



very top-down, in which the government is the centre and they are the margins. However, they aim to remain in the margins because they have the power of the collective, whereas the State has only the power of force. As in the case of Espaço Commun Luiz Estrela, the power of the collective can influence the State and change the public policies in their favour.

The cultural organisation Art22 from Belo Horizonte also added that as an organisation that has existed for almost fifteen years, they have always identified as marginal<sup>7</sup>. As a group working with traditional Afro-Brazilian art and culture, they have been discriminated against because they do not fit the definition of the norm (white and middle class). Only with the implementation of the policy Cultura Viva did Art22 manage to become a Point of Culture and minimally become able to gain social visibility and maintain its practices. The programme Point of Culture gave their work credibility by financially supporting their actions, but also by connecting them to networks with other organisations, Councils and public forums through which they can put pressure on State and federal decisions regarding cultural policies.

## MARGINALITY IS A MATTER OF PERCEPTION

Spencer from Sweet Potato Community (Digua Community) gave a different perspective, in arguing that marginality is a matter of perception. According to Spencer the margins exist only in people’s heads and it is only if they think that they are marginalised, or they think that they have been perceived as marginal, that they become so. The Digua Community is a start-up community centre based in a formerly underground bomb shelter in Beijing. Prior to the Digua community, the shelters were used as living spaces without any basic conditions. As Spencer explained, the changes in design created a space available to the community where they can work, study, and have access to technology that they did not have before. Even though



the community is not far from the centre of Beijing, the population living there is low middle class. However, as Spencer states, they did not feel marginal or excluded because marginalisation is fluid and ever-changing, so people move within the social structure and challenge the one-dimensional understanding of marginality.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Due to scarce resources and limited access, the Ocupação Tina Martins from Brazil and the Regional Labour Union of Jinzhan Township from China have expanded their methodologies from addressing the individual to the collective. Moreover, these two groups are examples of practices addressing the commons for collective resource allocation. The Espaço Commun Luiz Estrela and Art22 have challenged the top-down discourse on cultural policies, by creating pressure for cultural change through the arts from the margins. Finally, the Digua Community is an inspirational example for future Chinese cultural policies, which are in urgent need of implementation. Fundamentally, all groups’ actions reflect a social concern for sharing the commons, sharing resources and technologies with all members of society, but also for providing for the ones who have been historically excluded from institutional attention.

The examples inform us that the concept of marginality is far more complex. The one-dimensional social and political understanding of the margins leads to over-simplified cultural policies which encourage the dichotomisation between ‘the centre’ and ‘the margins’. For that reason, grassroots organisations and individuals, operating from the margins, are setting an example for sound forward-looking cultural policies.

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1 <http://brigidacampbell.art.br>  
2 <http://arteparaumacidadeensivel.wordpress.com>  
3 <https://www.facebook.com/Ocupacaotinamartins/>  
4 <https://www.facebook.com/movimentoolga/>  
5 [www.dashengchang.org.cn](http://www.dashengchang.org.cn)  
6 <https://www.facebook.com/espacoluizestrela>  
7 <http://aiaasca.blogspot.it/>



# COLLECTIVES AND BOTTOM-UP INITIATIVES

IVA ČUKIĆ

LEARNING FROM  
THE EXAMPLES IN  
BRAZIL

The aggravation of social inequalities and poverty, and the rise of unemployment and existential uncertainty in Brazil, especially among young people, has driven various groups and individuals to seek niches beyond traditional social structures in the hope of discovering new possibilities and ways of (re-)action in order to achieve their desires and needs. In the modern capitalist system, these actors do not have the same level of social and political power and influence, nor is there equal opportunities for involvement in decision-making processes and management of public resources and the city. What is particularly noticeable in Brazil, especially in Belo Horizonte, is the connection and gathering of different groups and individuals with the intention of creating new spaces and forms of sociability which are manifested through new forms of work and decision-making, self-organisation, temporary structures and activities.

In contemporary theoretical discourse, collectives and bottom-up initiatives are often discussed within the concepts of neo-Marxist theory, putting an emphasis on the concepts of the right to the city and everyday life, endeavouring to establish a new system of values, different to that of the dominant pervasive neo-Liberal paradigm. The idea behind such initiatives is opening up the opportunities to realise systematic change in city production by legitimising new social and cultural values, leading to establishing new urban relationships. The neo-Marxist concept of sociable space frames space as a result of social production and the expression of different social processes. Hence, the phenomenon of spatiality comes from specific (informal) social practices, and thus every society produces its own space.

Lefebvre's observations through theory of production of space provide a specific way of interpreting and reading this collective practice. The author interprets the production of space through the levels of: [1] spatial practices (production, reproduction and the set of spatial characteristics that form society), [2] representation of space (symbols, meanings, knowledge and ideas), [3] representational space (lived experiences and lived space). In this sense, space represents a reproduction of directly endured reality, where social activity represents a major area of political struggle. For Lefebvre, the nature of space is the key element in any process of transformation of social relations. He argues that the social and political nature of space in the context of social and economic change of urban development is at the centre of the political agenda. He believes that the operational and instrumental role of space can lead to a place of conflict and become a central part of political struggle. Therefore Lefebvre recognises the important role of the "place of conflict" in order to create spatial heterogeneity, through the redefinition of imposed vision and relationships, respecting the right to be different. The right to be different is realised through spontaneous actions and activities; by practising everyday life that is contrary to the dominant paradigms of urban development. The collective bottom-up practices and initiatives in the context of activist practices and spaces for the community can thus be considered a form of rebellion and resistance to the repressive state apparatus and the logic of the real estate market, by the simple fact that they create autonomous spaces of everyday life. These activist practices and spaces for the community are often

associated with the concepts of temporary autonomous zones and the right to the city, drawing on the political ideas of Hakim Bay, David Harvey and Henri Lefebvre, as well as an entire list of ideas formulated around alternative economy, ideology and practice.

The political writer Hakim Bay is the author of the concept of Temporary autonomous zones (or TAZ), which has strongly influenced contemporary social movements. According to Bay, the characteristics of temporary autonomous zones are: [1] their temporary nature and limited duration; [2] their mobility, and ability to establish elsewhere; [3] their relative invisibility; [4] their spontaneity; [5] their network structure, which does not imply exclusively the use of information and communication technologies, but also networking and sharing experiences and knowledge that are crucial to their continuity; [6] their direct relationships, by bringing together individuals into groups, based on common interests and the principle of mutual assistance.

These characteristics described by Bay can be identified on the ground in the Brazilian city of Belo Horizonte, in the specific collective practices and initiatives of *The People's Horizontal Assembly* (Assembleia Popular Horizontal), *The Popular Committee for the World Cup* (Comitê Popular Copa), *Zero Tariff* (Tarifa Zero), *the MC's Duel* (Duelo de MC's), *The Common Space Luis Estrela* (Espaço Comum Luiz Estrela), *The Occupation Hope BH* (Ocupação Esperança BH), *Erro99*, *Occupation Tina Martins* or *Home for Women Tina Martins* (Ocupação Tina Martins ou Casa de referência a mulher Tina Martins), to name but a few. These initiatives are formed as activist practices and spaces for the community, or marginal groups. They represent a part of broader social movements, through which they articulate political action against the monopoly of the state and market, whilst also fighting against social inequality, and fighting for the rights of vulnerable and marginalised groups and individuals. By using and shaping the space to meet the needs of the community, these groups create autonomous spaces of everyday life, or spaces that Lefebvre described as lived spaces: spaces of new urban sociability. Collective bottom-up practices and initiatives have far greater freedom in forming their own profile of space and functioning on the basis of preferences of people that use it, as well as being able to articulate the needs, interests and desires of the community. In this way, the community is formed through interactions based on common activities and recognition of the right to social and physical space.

Public space, and the activities that happen in it, represent the reflection of human life in the city. Thus, the nature of collective and bottom-up practices and initiatives in the public space of Belo Horizonte can be interpreted in several ways. The diversity of action and activities depends on the heterogeneous nature of their initiators, as well as the problems that they want to address, thus they can be interpreted as performative action (social and cultural), or as ideologically motivated action (political protest). The aim of these various forms of collective practice, bottom-up initiatives or interventions in public space, is to provoke dialogue that can be viewed through creative improvisation and adaptation in space, or in the case of political protest, to encourage long-term changes in social and physical space. In reaction to the speculative activities in Brazil in recent years we have seen the manifestation of collective practices through political actions and expressions of protest from *The People's Horizontal Assembly*, *The Popular Committee for the World Cup*, *Zero Tariff*. These political and protest actions arise from imposed ideas, as well as ideas of the rights of citizens, which is reflected through the occupation of space and the transformation of streets and public spaces for a short period of time. For example, the ideological and political position of the actors involved in *The People's Horizontal Assembly* is formed on the basis of principled commitment and moral conviction, as well as by recognising the phenomenon of civic awareness. Thus, this political movement, as a sign of protest, occupies public space in order to emphasise the negative impacts of great social inequalities and development through the market economy.

On the other hand, there are site-specific works, various forms of performative action and participatory forms of cultural and social activities which are developing tactics for the appropriation of public spaces, such as *the MC's Duel*, *The Home for Women Tina Martins* and *The Common Space Luis Estrela*. This type of action can be seen as part of a wider phenomenon of DIY-philosophy, dealing with the city through the concept of production of the city according to the actual needs of their users. These examples demonstrate that operating in the public space contributes to strengthening the collective spirit, improving urban (public) space and making that (collective) space more sustainable. Following neo-Marxist concepts and theory of production of space, these collective practices and bottom-up initiatives are becoming, through their performative actions, central elements in the production of space. Performative collective action and space thus result in a cause-and-effect relationship; mutually interdependent processes that mark everyday life. Hence, new urban sociability finds public space as a space of participation and debate on the creation of new possibilities, and the actors in these collective practices are in the process of (ful-)filling the space with new meanings and relations.

Regardless of the common ephemeral character of these forms of collective action and bottom-up initiatives, they can have a long-term impact on society by provoking dialogue on current issues about culture, society, politics, and urban development. A large number of different research studies are pointing to the importance of collective performative actions, collective and bottom-up initiatives, because of their tendency to turn towards the public sphere. By practising different forms of collective actions, initiatives can form the space according to the actual needs of actors involved in the process of (self-)organisation by establishing their own system of values in their urban environment. Proponents of the neo-Marxist concept of the right to the city describe this right as the right to live in the city, but also as a right of citizens to defend the space and the city from repressive state or market apparatus. The concept of the right to the city makes visible the fact that the city is public and it represents the place of social interaction. Thus, the given examples of collective and bottom-up initiatives show that local communities, activist and civil society organisations are occupying public space in different ways, emphasising their right to the city and everyday life, demonstrating alternative ways of managing and using space and the city. In that sense, the used and lived space becomes an ideological and political product.

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# HACK

## BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS IN PUBLIC SPACES

While globalisation breaks down geographic, cultural and economic borders, it impacts our everyday lives in many ways, creating new opportunities, but also new insecurities. It's becoming more and more difficult to see, let alone adapt to the changes it is having on our local economies and our local communities.

What does local mean when the shop window of an eBay trader is closer to you on your laptop than the independent clothes store down your high street?

Who's got more foreign workers in their town, the village with a high influx of immigrants or the suburb whose main employer has off-shored its factory to India? Who has a more multicultural experience, the kid going to school in Brick Lane or the gamer from Shropshire learning Minecraft with children from across the world?

Not knowing how to navigate a world constantly redefined, many people become tempted by physical, economic and cultural borders to protect themselves from what they can't control nor understand – from immigration controls to gated communities.

As Karen Malone argues: 'All boundaries, whether national, global or simply street names on a road map are socially constructed. They are as much the products of society as are other social relations that mark the landscape.'

Despite the opportunities globalisation creates, only some have the capabilities to re-shape these borders. There are corporate powers who blur the boundaries between private and common goods, asset stripping our natural, digital and economic resources. We see energy companies fracking our environment, technology agencies exploiting our data and supermarkets hoarding our land. By doing this, they prevent the rest of society from using these resources to develop new forms of common goods. As the concept of the commons has been revived, it's timely to reflect that it was the Inclosures Act that destroyed commoning, by creating boundaries around space.

Even at a very local level, something as benign as an administrative boundary can have deadly consequences. Type 'gang map' into Google and see if a gang controls the area where you live. Mine is at the intersection of the 'territories' of three different gangs! For them, geography is both a symbol of power and threat – many young people are very scared of crossing into different postcodes.

There lies the biggest frontier, between those who reshape borders and those reshaped by them. But there are methods we can learn from that people use to cross invisible and physical boundaries within public space. Learning from these can help others reshape the borders that restrict them.

### 1. UNDERSTAND HOW PEOPLE EXPERIENCE BORDERS

Living libraries help people tell their story in public space on how borders have affected them, while participatory art helps people map their personal boundaries or represent the experiences of people affected by borders, like the Campito project.

# (Y)OUR

NOEL HATCH

# BORDERS

### 2. MAP THE IMPACT OF BORDERS AND INTERSECTIONS ON PEOPLE'S LIVES

Asset mapping walks and collaborative modelling help document the impact of the borders that people experience in their neighbourhood, whether that's places they don't feel safe or spaces they don't feel included in. You can also document the intersections where these are being broken down, like the Water Playground Game in Brussels.

### 3. BRIDGING BORDERS TO MAKE PUBLIC SPACES MORE INCLUSIVE

Groups are also prototyping ways to break down physical borders to make spaces more accessible. The places in between the German/Polish borders show you can turn a 'no man's land' into an experimental environment with its own currency.

### 4. SUBVERTING BORDERS TO SHOW NEW WAYS OF LIVING

People have always tweaked the way things have evolved. For example ARTfarm has turned a crossing between two blocks into a transitional space to grow plants and to meet, while Bubbleware turns the linear lines that define where we walk into circular bubbles where people can interact.

However, there are people subverting the systems that define the boundaries of our public spaces, from 'chair bombing' parking spaces to protest against not being able to sit on the sidewalk to turning foreclosure adverts into ways to let people know where to squat. In some cases, citizens are creating their own boundaries to show the authorities the solutions needed, like creating their own 'guerrilla bike lanes'.

If we can learn to see the invisible and physical borders that people experience in our neighbourhoods, we can design and open up public spaces to be more accessible and inclusive for everyone to feel the space is theirs.

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# THE SIXTH RING

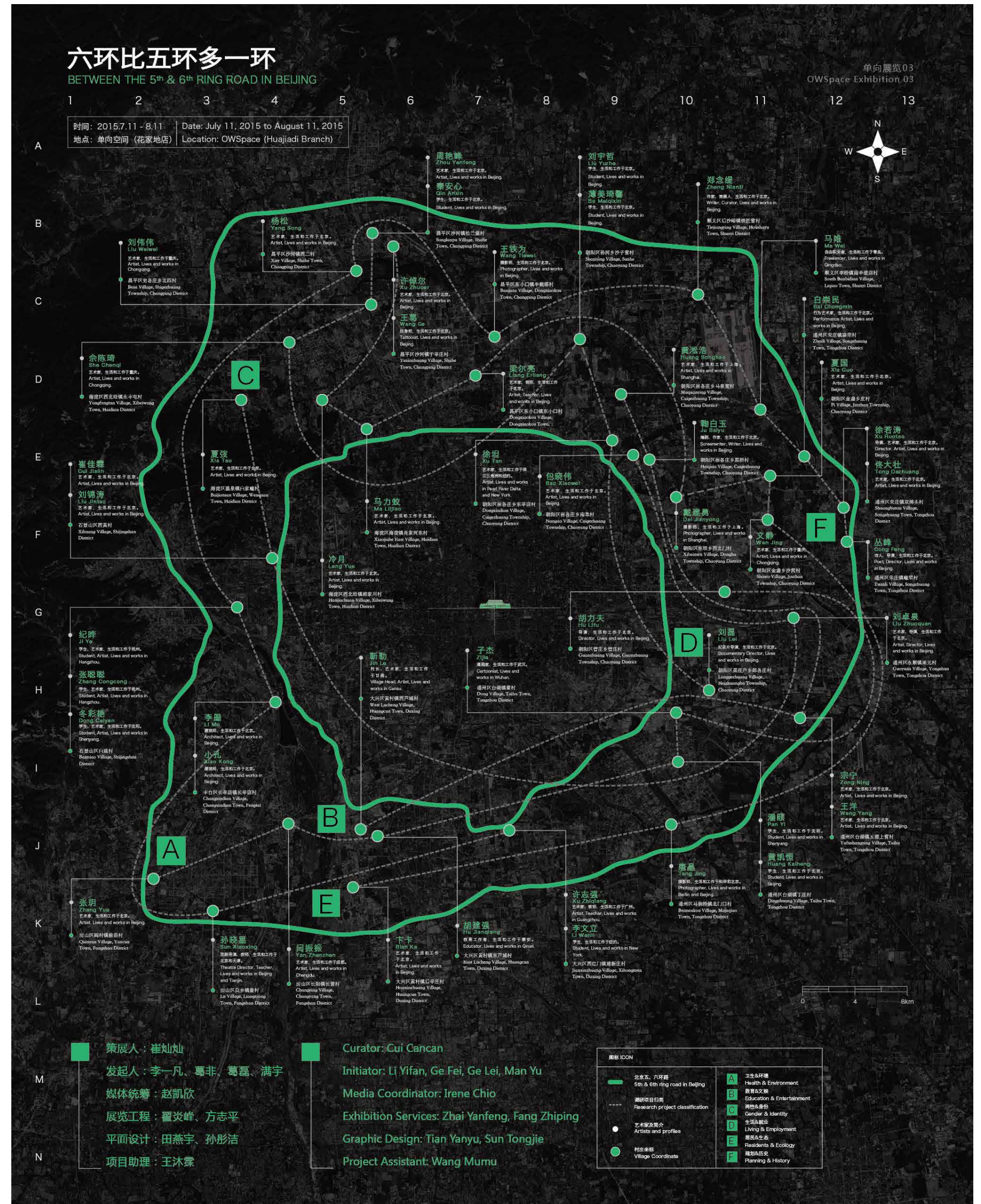
INTERVIEW WITH MAN YU 满宇,  
GE FEI 葛非 AND GE LEI 葛磊  
BY LUIGI GALIMBERTI 鲁及  
AND MA YONGFENG 馬永峰

# PROJECT

*The Sixth Ring Is One Ring More than the Fifth* is a survey project started by the publishing house Floor #2 Press and conducted by artists in the administrative villages within the fifth and sixth rings of Beijing. The project invited and welcomed each participant who was interested in the project to conduct field surveys, in an artistic form, on one particular aspect of a selected village in the region, to be carried out independently or cooperatively with local people for a period of not less than 10 days. A total of 51 participants, made up of artists, film directors, writers, architects and designers, were divided into 40 teams, and each team chose an area of the selected village in which to do the surveys. The surveys covered subjects including food, hygiene, transportation, accommodation, education, entertainment and local customs, giving a comprehensive and rich view of the commonalities and variety in the region. The project has received a great deal of attention ever since, as many important media channels in China have reported on the project, giving more people the possibility to know about and understand this region. It has indeed inspired a new wave of site-specific works in Chinese contemporary art.

**Why did you start this project? Why was it so important to you?**  
We, the three of us, thought about working with Li Yifang, a teacher in Sichuan Fine Arts Institute, on a project about Chinese rural villages at first, because we were concerned with the subject of Chinese rural villages. Later we found that we were more interested in the relations between cities and rural villages, so we went to the villages surrounding Beijing in 2013, such as the village Pi Cun, to see what state the villages were in. We were shocked by what we saw. Then we went to Heiqiao village and many other villages. We wanted to see what they too looked like.

As we mentioned above, we were in Heiqiao village, where about 40,000 migrant workers from all over the country are gathered. The one to two thousand or so artists living there however, in the same village, had nothing to do with them; there was a river running between them. We thought that the artists were probably all working in their workshops and did not really understand the village at all. So we thought to invite the artists – and what we mean by “artists” here is in a broad sense, encompassing architects, musicians, dancers, etc. – to see the villages. We did not expect them to create works from the visits.







DAI HUA 代化, 我顶我倒 (BIRTH AND DESTRUCTION), 2008, DETAIL

After that, we had many discussions and an idea began to emerge, that of a survey. Each artist had his own expertise and sees things from his own perspective, with his own interests, with different views regarding hygiene, education, etc. So there are issues relating to schools for workers' children, transportation, labour security, medication, and the list goes on. In the end we divided the artists – 51 in total – into 40 teams to cover all the issues that had arisen.

**In the face of the increasingly fierce social conflicts or tension, as a publishing house, what role do you think artists can play?** During actual operations we found that artists basically couldn't do anything. While on site, in fact, no one needs art or any artistic form, so we think when artists went to a village to explore and start their work, it was more about attracting people's attention through the forms artists used, or the issues presented. So we thought one important point we were exploring was what artists can do in society, when art is cast as a subject.

We also emphasised a sociological approach. Although the surveys conducted by the artists had a sociological appearance, they were definitely different from those that would be conducted by sociologists; the results tended to be more vivid, specific and detail-oriented. For example, one issue explored was that of stray dogs – a sociologist wouldn't investigate such an issue. Artists have certain ways – such as by exaggeration – to attract people's attention and make the subject more visible.

**How do you define your work in this project? For the artists, the architects and others from different fields, what are their approaches in the relation between urban areas and villages? How do you position yourselves?**

There were three requirements, if an artist were involved. One was that the artist had to live in the village for at least 10 days, depending on the artist's individual situation. In fact, some of the artists lived there for over a month and some of them were staying there long term, and have continued working on the project. Every day we would broadcast their individual experiences live. Although we considered this project sociological, it was even more about individual experiences. It was about the events of individuals. So we expected a minimum of an 8-hour live broadcast every day. The last requirement was to prevent the artist taking the social site as a subject of art or treating it as a spectacle – as is the tendency in the specific context of Chinese contemporary art. To counter this, we required an investigative element to be included in the artists' work. This requirement was more flexible. We stopped artists from returning to the way of thinking about "making art", to doing work that would be directly related to the specific site. And since artists were creative by themselves, we thought it was good enough as long

as the investigative elements were included. These were the three basic requirements.

**If it is a total failure or frustration for an artist when confronting society, should the artist enter society entirely, or how can he make a living through his art?**

We think there are several reasons for an artist to return to society. The most important one is that there has been a crisis of practice in Chinese contemporary art – it does not have validity, and what we are trying to do is validate contemporary art in China – to see what artists can bring to society. That is a very important reason. Another reason is to do with the logic of contemporary art. Art has always been the practice of individuals, a response to the places where the artists are living, it is not something like a post-colonial product, or something about learning from others and copying styles, and then displaying the generated works in museums which have nothing to do with the real situation the artists are in. Also, I tend to oppose the so-called idea of "art enters society", because art itself is a part of society, it doesn't intervene with society, it has never been outside of society. To say that art has been something alien to society, and now it is entering society, reveals a certain concept of pure art. But pure art doesn't really exist; art is part of the order of society. What is art? That is a question we shall be cautious about. Is it a practice distributed or given an ideology by society? We shall be cautious about that. What we offer now is some kind of retort to what art has been considered to be. In the beginning, when we started the project, we went through a certain process, then we thought that was not art, not something we could accept, and then later on we came to a common conclusion that what we were doing was real contemporary art, while what others were doing was not, theirs was mimicry. Besides, we were not aiming this work at an audience of "the art world". And this brings us back to a basic principle: we have always thought that art should not intervene with social movements, but be part of them.

We should be able to reflect on our own behaviours. Unless artists are forced into a corner, they cannot be part of society.

In China, artists are very narcissistic. They consider themselves elite, apart from society, which means they are accomplices of power. That is exactly what we oppose in the project that we have been doing; we oppose hierarchical society, since this is the root of unfairness and injustice.

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# THE

# EMBODIED MARGINS



JOTA MOMBAÇA



FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: SARA/ELTON PANAMBY; TRANSCRIPCIONES CONSANGUÍNEAS (CONSANGUINEOUS TRANSCRIPTS), PERFORMANCE, PROMPTUS/TRANSMUTED, D.F., MEXICO, 2014; IDEM; TERTULIANA LUSTOSA (PREPARA NEM), ONE IS NOT BORN A WOMAN, BUT RATHER BECOMES TRAVECA, URBAN INTERVENTION, SLUT WALK, RIO DE JANEIRO, 2015; PHOTO BY CAROL MENDES



CAMILA BASTOS BACELLAR, 6 MINUTOS (SIX MINUTES), PERFORMANCE, CENTRO CULTURAL HELIO OITICICA, RIO DE JANEIRO, 2016, PHOTO BY MARTINO FRONGIA

In a recent essay entitled *Des(en)terror o Corpos* (Unearth the Body), the feminist writer Cintia Guedes called for the activation of “a movement of the memory and of the dreams”, which she defines as the sensitive operation of “digging among our ruins”. For her, this means unearthing in the archaeological site which is our body – as brown and black ex-colonised persons – the network of intimate wounds encompassed by the collective trauma of colonisation and slavery in the Brazilian embodiment. The body is thus understood not as mere biological matter, but as the complex web of forces in which biological information merge into imagination, ancestry, intuition, power, otherness, sensitivity, subjectivity, marginality, ethics, aesthetics, memory and politics.

*The Embodied Margins* is a photo-essay articulated by myself, in collaboration with six Brazilian artists; Camila Bastos Bacellar, Ligia Marina, Tertuliana Lustosa, Miro Spinelli, Michelle Mattiuzzi and Sara/Elton Panamby. The aim of this work is to approach the question of marginal embodiment through an inter-sectional methodology, which brings together a multitude of embodied differences, which in their crossings, yields the nomadic spatiality of the margins. For this reason, I wanted to bring together a group of artists whose works intervene in this debate, functioning as catalysts for a multi-layered image of how marginality articulates body-political (racialisation, gender inequality, sexual normalisation, etc.) and geopolitical (imperialism, impoverishment, *precaritisation*, etc.) frameworks in a non-homogeneous, contingent setting.

*6 Minutos* (6 Minutes) by Camila Bastos Bacellar consists of her collecting her menstrual blood, and then using a dropper to mark on a world map the global geography of the criminalisation of abortion. Each drop of blood signifies a critical physicality in the map, and inscribes the body and its politics on the geopolitical space of cartographic representation. This gesture smudges the map with a vivid testimony of the assault on women's autonomy; the intervention of neo-colonialist religious institutions in mass culture and the state; the collapse of public health; and femicide (*feminicídio*) as an act of war against women worldwide.

Speaking about *6 Minutos* Bacellar states, “certain bodies can be thought of as territories occupied and colonised by unequal power relations”. With this short sentence, the artist proposes a reconceptualisation of the body, which would take into account the role colonisation plays on certain embodiments. The body, according to Bacellar, is first a living territory, and then a colonised one. It is thus a battleground where unequal forces fight to achieve at least two antithetic aims: the right to life and body on the one hand, and the right to deny the right to life and body for certain classes of people on the other.

In this sense, the work *El primer golpe en Brasil fué hace 516 años* (The first coup in Brazil was 516 years ago) by Ligia Marina, in collaboration with Unpezverde from Costa Rica, provides a strong image: the unprotected body of the artist covered by green and yellow inks violently thrown against her. Yellow and green are the colours of Brazilian nationalism. By choosing them, the artist materialises a critique of the continuity between historical colonialism and the internal colonialism of nationalistic ideology. As the title of the work proposes, the first coup was colonial, and after that, each coup (and there are so many in our history!) has been an extension of this first one.

The ink over the artist's body summarises - as no other representation could - the violent deletion which is constitutive of the fabrication of any national identity. It is the body and its living vulnerability that makes the difference. With its own complexity and opacity, the performance becomes a sensitive platform whereby the anti-colonial and anti-nationalist critique of the artist is spread through other bodies as a sensation, a shared sensibility contingent to the presence of her own body-in-action among others. Since the picture registers an action, it's possible to visually perceive this argument in the artist's work, although nothing can capture the experience like being present to witness it.

At this point, I must emphasise how it is important, in approaching the embodied margins, to acknowledge that each work brought here, as well as my own textual contribution as articulator of this



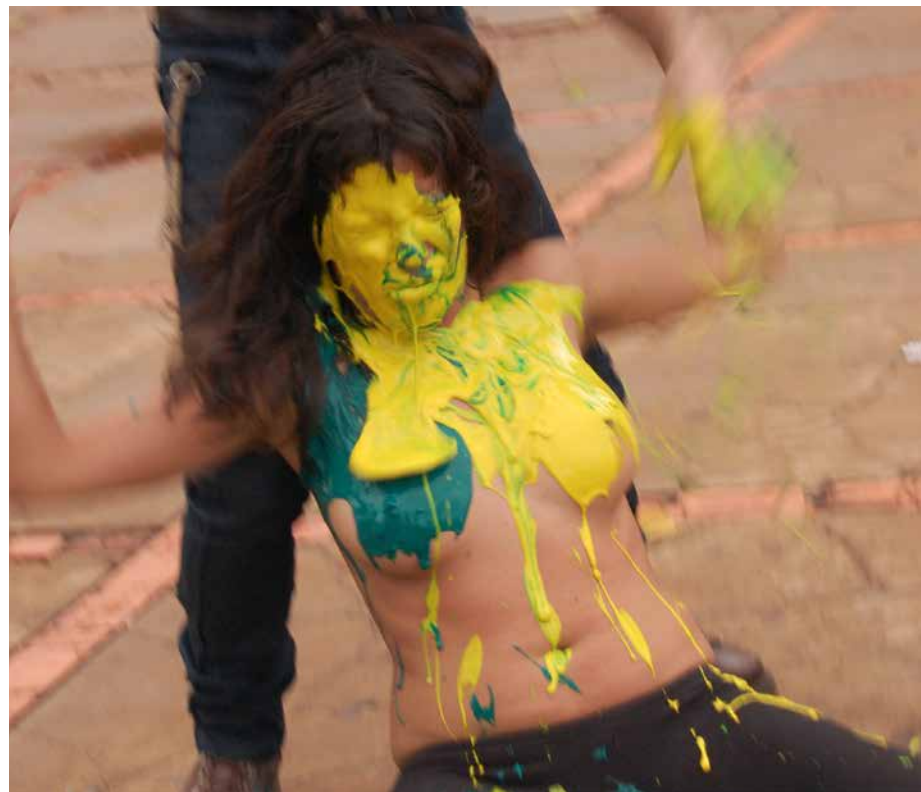


photo-essay, are committed to a situated, partial and politically engaged perspective. To become aware of this is finally to recognise that “no one here is playing universal”, and that the whole ideal of an universal thinking (or politics, or art, or body, or subjectivity) is itself a very well situated fabrication of the colonisation of knowledge as the global dominant epistemology.

The following artist, Tertuliana Lustosa, is an anti-colonial writer and activist for trans-gender rights. The picture I chose to display here was taken during the 2015 Rio Slut Walk. Among other trans\* activists, the artist dressed in a meat-bikini and walked along the waterfront of Copacabana with the banner “one is not born a woman, but rather becomes traveca”<sup>1</sup>. More than the bodily presence of the artist and the meat clothing she was dressed in, I would like to highlight the parody of Beauvoir’s famous statement, “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman”.

As a trans-gender artist-theorist, Lustosa’s sentence makes problematic both normative gender definitions, and the canon of constructionist gender perspectives. It consequently disrupts the historical erasure of trans-gender voices and perspectives in the intellectual, artistic and political fields, as well as in Westernised society in general. Lustosa writes, “this manifesto arises as a weapon for intellectual illegality (*clandestinidade*).” She continues, “even if it won’t bring effective solutions for the Transphobia problem in Brazil, it breaks my silence as a Travesti<sup>2</sup> Baiana<sup>3</sup>, which I consider as a step towards Transrevolutions in this country.”

In some sense, there is no ontological difference between political space and artistic-intellectual space, as there is no difference between either of those spaces and society, the public space or the collective-making-of-daily-life: everything is for destroying-con-

structing. Miro Spinelli – whose *Gordura Trans #6* (Trans Fat #6) appears next – steps beyond their<sup>4</sup> own body-as-question, into a public questioning of systemic definitions of health, beauty, welfare, gender and social normality. Thanks to this work, a whole complex of questions are dragged from the personal to the political.

The trans-fat embodiment is currently represented by many official discourses as an ill, diseased, pathological embodiment and sub-officially as a criminal, illegal and monstrous one. Spinelli’s work could be thought of as a reaction against this discursive field and the violent practices it encompasses and generates as social effect. Part of their performance is to rub a huge amount of fat (butter, in this case) all over their body. They thus enact by themselves the authorisation for their trans-fat embodiment to exist, unbound by the redeeming promises of gender normalisation as well as publicity against being overweight. By excess, they produce a slippery body capable of escaping normative regimes, since there’s no hand to detain a body full of fat.

On March 2016 I was invited to speak in a seminar hosted by SESC-SP about *kuir*<sup>5</sup> practices in the Brazilian contemporary artistic scene, and one of the other speakers was the artist Michelle Mattiuzzi. Mattiuzzi is an inter-disciplinary artist whose works usually discuss racism and racialisation in Brazilian culture, with a specific focus on whiteness and white supremacy. In her presentation, she outlined her trajectory as a black artist, connecting it with the questions her work embraces. She also, for the first time, showed the pictures she had taken just three weeks before of the ruins of her apartment, that had accidentally burnt down after a short-circuit, which was due to the bad-maintenance of the public system of electricity distribution in the centre of Salvador.

Mattiuzzi’s attitude towards the ruins was to preserve them as much as possible, to learn from it, to measure the damages, to dwell with her losses by acknowledging and appropriating them not just as the reminiscence of a tragic episode of her life, but as a paradigmatic standing point for reflecting on dispossession and personal collapse, along with the current Brazilian dissolution into the Global Crisis



MICHELLE MATTIUZZI AT THE RUINS OF HER APARTMENT, SANTO ANTONIO ALEM DO CARMO, SALVADOR, 2016

rhetoric. It is not just the burning down of an apartment that matters here, but the precariousness compounded by that, both in a practical and abstract sense. The anthropologist Yael Navaro-Yashin proposes the concept of “ruination”, which is “the material remains of artefacts of destruction and violation, but also (...) the subjectivities and residual affects that linger, like a hangover, in the aftermath of war or violence”. The attitude of bringing these images to life can be thought of as an act of ruination by the artist. Once her body appears in the image, the ruin becomes embodied itself. Bending Navaro-Yashin’s concept a little, and mixing it with Mattiuzzi’s poetic gesture, I would say that the ruination is also the acknowledgement of the ruins as an embodied information.

Blood arises as a question in Panamby’s work, who burrows their own body-in-action. Through perforations, they investigate and modify a particular embodiment process which leads the body to a porous condition – each hole they create works as a platform for the dissolution of boundaries, and for self-investigation. In *Transcripciones Consanguineas* (Consanguineous Transcripts), blood creates a map of its own trajectory across the artist’s body, combining with sweat, saliva and rock salt in a complex fluid that is as fertile as it is poisonous. The word and the very action of writing are also important elements for Panamby. According to their proposition, to write is also a way of bleeding. And it is therefore a way of “digging among our ruins”, similar to the concepts thus far explored in the text.

Before returning to the perspective of Cintia Guedes presented in the beginning of the text, it is important to note how her thinking has been informed by the work she has developed with Camila Bastos Bacellar, Angela Donini and Sara/Elton Panamby during the workshop *Resistências Feministas na Arte da Vida* (Feminist Resistance in the Art of Life). As all these artists propose, to unearth the body we must go to the ruins of our embodiment and dig it up, ashes and all, finding, through this search, tools for mourning but also re-composition on a personal level. This process also gives us an archive of affective information with which it is possible to re-imagine our collective present, past and future.

Here, I have tried to pull together the complex range of forces that these artists are bringing into the Brazilian contemporary art scene. Although this is no more than a rough stencilling, and each image presented here instigates a plethora of questions I could not address here, I believe this photo essay can at least work as a starting point for a re-consideration of Brazilian embodied margins in the contemporary world.

**JOTA MOMBAÇA** is a writer, performer and autonomous researcher. He is a participant in Transnational Dialogues 2014.

[P. 48]  
FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: LIGIA MARINA FT. UNPEZVERDE. EL PRIMER GOLPE EN BRASIL FUE HACER 516 AÑOS (THE FIRST COUP IN BRAZIL WAS 516 YEARS AGO), PERFORMANCE, SUMMER WORKSHOP FOR REBELLE ARTISTS BY LA POCHA NOSTRA, SAN JOSE, COSTA RICA, 2014, PHOTO BY MAURICIO CANTILLO; IDEM; MIRO SPINELLI, GORDURA TRANS (TRANS FAT) #6, PERFORMANCE, DEPOIS DO FUTURO (AFTER THE FUTURE), EAV PARQUE LAGE, RIO DE JANEIRO, PHOTO BY FRANCISCO COSTA; IDEM

1 “Traveca” is a negative term used in the colloquial Brazilian language which is culturally used to attack effeminate people in general, and specifically queer and transgender women. The artist here proposes a re-appropriation of this term, which is not universally applicable, since it depends on the local context and the specific localisation from which her theoretic and artistic perspective emerges.

2 There is no translation for the word “travesti”, since it refers to a local gender identity in Brazil.

3 “Baiana” is one of the most popular terms for designating North-Eastern people in both Southern and South regions of Brazil. Actually the term refers to the people born in Bahia (one of the North-Eastern states in Brazil), but it has become a negative term used against internal migrants from North and North-East to South and South-East, as well as North-Eastern people in general. The artist appropriates the term contextually, since she is an internal migrant herself.

4 As the artist presents themselves as a non-binary person, I prefer to follow the recommendation for referring to them in the third person plural. The same strategy is used when referring to Sara/Elton Panamby, who also identifies as non-binary.

5 “Kuir” is an informal variation, used in Latin America, of the English term “queer”.



# TRA(N)SLATING ART. TWO INTERVENTIONS

## BY JOTA MOMBAÇA AND MA YONGFENG

LUIGI GALIMBERTI

### PRELUDE

On the day we landed in Belgrade to take part in the 2015 Transeuropa Festival, the artists Ma Yongfeng and Jota Mombaça, and I went out for an exploratory walk in the city centre. After some time wandering around the old quarters of Serbia's capital city, we eventually ended up in the area located between the central bus station and the railway station. During Fall 2015, uninterrupted flows of migrants crossed these parts, coming from the countries south of the Mediterranean Sea, as well as from other areas of Africa and Asia. The refugees were fleeing their native lands because of war and misery, hoping to build a more dignified life for themselves, and their families, in wealthier, safer European countries. A typical journey started in Syria, then went through Turkey, Greece, Macedonia and Serbia. They would then hope to enter the European Union via Hungary, before continuing on to Austria, to reach Germany or, even further, Sweden or Denmark. Hundreds of migrants arriving on a daily basis, stopping and camping from any time between a couple of days and twelve weeks in the Luke Čelovića or Bristol parks, before continuing their journey northwards.



### THE REFUGEE PARKS

When Jota, Ma and myself entered one of the parks on 28 September 2015, the situation was dire. Pouring rain and cold weather had forced the refugees to take shelter inside their small and overcrowded tents, often full of litter, while the parks themselves resembled mudflats. The sight was moving; the artists were newly-arrived in Europe from far-away countries, and they hadn't been aware of the sheer magnitude and seriousness of the so-called refugee crisis until then. Both artists however immediately found connections between this world and their respective contexts of provenance. For Ma it was the internally displaced people of China, such as the victims of the 2008 Sichuan earthquake. For Jota it was the marginalised people of Brazil that fight a daily struggle for their land, including the indigenous populations, and those dwelling in areas under the constant threat of being evicted to make way for urban "regeneration".

### FROM BRAZIL TO BELGRADE

Jota Mombaça's original plan for the Transeuropa Festival was to re-stage "Soterramento (Burial)", a performance that he had first con-

ceived for the meeting "Incontro C.O.P.A.S – 12 Cidades em Tensão" at the Goethe-Institut São Paulo, in 2014. The development of the intended action was relatively simple. The artist would come to the location of the performance and lie down, almost completely naked. Then, one or more assistants, coming out from amongst the audience, would begin to throw earth over his body with the help of a shovel. This operation would continue until his body, with the exception of his head, would be completely covered with earth. During the action and in the background, a text would be read aloud. The text listed people who had gone missing, had been murdered, or injured, by police violence in Brazil since June 2013. At the end of the performance, the artist would have risen up from the ground, leaving the earth that had covered his body as an installation, or memorial, to the victims of systemic violence and state terrorism in Brazil. To re-stage this performance in Belgrade however, the artist had to overcome two great obstacles.

The first difficulty was finding a suitable location. Indoor venues were quickly dismissed, mainly because of the difficulties of transporting the necessary amount of earth to the location: an estimated two cubic metres or, in weight, two to three tonnes, was thought to be required. As for suitable outdoor locations, a number of possibilities were considered, but eventually dismissed. The first option was one of the parks where the refugees stayed, but the artist felt that his performance risked causing further pain to those already suffering many traumas and difficult conditions. The second option was the Terazijaska Terrace, a sloping park coming down from the Terazije Ridge, and an excellent natural viewpoint looking out to the river Sava. The location was both central, and close to the refugee parks, but also, in the eyes of the artist, it provided the necessary isolation and detachment that would make the performance really work. Trucking the earth to this location however, required authorisation from the local municipality, and that needed a long bureaucratic rigmarole. The third location that was then considered was Nikola Pašić Square, built during the 1950s with the name Marx and Engels Square, and dominated by the impressive Trade Union Hall. The artist liked the fact that the terrain on which the square was built had been so hilly that lots of earth had had to be removed in order to make its construction possible. Bringing earth back into the square seemed apt, representing a physically meaningful intervention in the urban landscape, but the square's monumentality, and its lack of thematic link to the message that Jota wanted to convey, meant that also this location was dismissed.



### CONTESTED GROUND

Since delivering two tonnes of earth to any part of central Belgrade seemed to require too much money and time, considering both buying the earth and transporting it, the artist had to start looking for a place where the earth was readily available. Amongst all active construction sites in the centre, the Belgrade Waterfront was by far the largest and, coincidentally, also the most politically charged. Belgrade Waterfront is a multi-billion project of hotels, offices, malls and highbrow residences dominated by what will be, if it is ever built, the tallest skyscraper of the whole of the Balkans. Of disproportionate grandeur, the project is the result of a partnership between the current Serbian government and Eagle Hills, an Abu-Dhabi-based developer: a partnership, critics say, that has simply brought more corruption and speculation to the city, rather than real economic benefits. The fact that the agreement to build the development was done almost entirely in secret and without the carrying out of the mandatory public consultations indeed suggests that the critics may not have been completely wrong.

One of the greatest opponents to the development is the movement Ne da(vi)mo Beograd, which could be translated as "We won't let Belgrade d(r)own". The movement organises street protests carrying a giant yellow duck (by a twist of fate, a big yellow duck was also used in the protests calling for Dilma Rousseff's impeachment in December 2015 by supporters of the ultra-liberal FIESP, the federation of industries of the State of São Paulo). As is often the case with many "regeneration" processes affecting global cities across the world, we are still waiting to see the so-called "benefits" of these megalomaniac plans, but the downsides are clearly, and quickly, visible. In fact, many families living in the area of the 'one-day-to-be' Belgrade Waterfront had been summarily evicted during 2015, with only a few days warning, before their houses were demolished (Brazilian readers will find unsurprising similarities between this case and the "regeneration" of Rio de Janeiro's Porto Maravilha, which is one of the most prominent stages of the 2016 Olympics).



### REMEMBERING

The second challenge for the artist was to make the message of the performance meaningful to the local context and, most importantly, understandable to its public. In the performance, equal emphasis was to be given to the act of burying the artist's body under the earth, and the content of the text that is read aloud during the unfolding of the action. While the original text included references to different types of unjustified violence on the part of the police, motivated by racial, sexual or class discrimination, the new text that Jota specifically drafted for the performance in Belgrade focused on several cases of structural violence against minorities in Brazil, particularly

regarding territorial issues. Among the 17 instances reported in the text, all dating from 2012 to 2015, a sample is cited here:

Mato Grosso do Sul, Yvu Katu, land of the people Guarani Nandeva (2013): a delegate of the Federal Police tried to expropriate the traditional land of these indigenous people. As the community refused to accept such expropriation, he threatened to do it with the help of the military National Force. Two days later, a paramilitary group surrounded and attacked the community.

Rio de Janeiro, Aldeia Maracanã (2013): for the construction of a parking lot on the World Cup's site, the government of Rio perpetrated the expropriation of Aldeia Maracanã. They sent military police forces and violently evicted the indigenous people from the village. Seven people were arrested and many wounded by the police.

Maranhão, Vila Luizão (2015): the community people tried to resist the violent expropriation perpetrated by the military police. During the confrontation, a policeman shot and killed one person.

The list goes on until it reaches its concluding paragraph: "Here are only a few cases among the many that have taken place in Brazil in recent years. The laws, as well as its agents, are mobilized for the benefit of the rich. Many of the cases mentioned in this short memorial are against the Constitution, as well as being anti-humanitarian. The rights of minorities are disrespected every day. Despite that, the people keep struggling for their lives and believe in the potentiality of self-organization as a tool of self-defence for those who are constantly assaulted by power".





## THE PERFORMANCE

<https://vimeo.com/153102178>

On 3 October 2015, at around 2.40 PM, Jota Mombaça and a first group of followers left Belgrade's Remont Gallery with shovels under their arms, descending the city centre and eventually reaching the Sava river. After a good walk from the Savamala area towards the Gazela Bridge, the group came to a location within the Belgrade Waterfront's construction site; a spot identified during one of the preparatory walks. There, earth and construction rubbles could be used for the purposes of the performance. The action was illegal per se, since it constituted an unauthorised gathering in public space, which is forbidden by Serbian law. In addition to that, the sensitivity of the location, situated a few hundred metres from the core of Belgrade Waterfront's redevelopment, led everyone to expect that the performance would be interrupted and halted by the municipal police, or by the private security patrolling the site of Belgrade Waterfront. Instead, we found an interstice of power.

The performance started at around 3.30 PM and lasted for about 20 minutes. The remaining earth was left in the location as a memorial to the victims of territorial struggles from Brazil to Belgrade. The memorial was untouched and was still recognisable a number of days later.



## BALANCING THE RISKS

On the other side, the making of Ma Yongfeng's performance also underwent an elaborate process of adaptation and rejection. Like Jota, Ma too was struck by the dire conditions of the refugee camps in Belgrade, as well as by the sheer magnitude of the so-called migrant crisis that Europe was facing at the time. While Jota eventually decided not to stage his performance inside or near the refugee parks, Ma felt that he wanted to act inside the parks and with the refugees themselves. He was aware that his action however risked using the migrants and their suffering as a mere scenography, creating an intervention that would be meaningful only to him, and not to the local context nor to the audience of the Festival, nor, even worse, to the refugees themselves. After many visits to the camps and numerous discussions with the local activists that had been working with the refugees since the start of the crisis some months earlier, Ma eventually managed to come up with a plan for his artistic action.



Still marked by the very first visit to the parks on the day of his arrival, when the bad weather seemed to be making the refugees' life in the camp unbearable, Ma decided to buy 30 good-quality raincoats that he would give to the refugees as a gift (he actually managed to get the price of each raincoat down to 600 dinars, or €5, from a local Chinese-run shop, compared with the hefty 1,800 dinars price tag asked at nearby market stalls...). Ma also bought some permanent markers, which he would use to write a message to the refugees on the raincoats that he had bought.

The first challenge was to decide what to write on the raincoats, and in which language. Using Chinese and its characters would have been a familiar gesture for him. It would also have created a strong connection between the action and his visible identity as an artist from China. However, Ma wanted his message to be read and understood by the recipients of his gift. While writing the message in Arabic was briefly taken into consideration, before being dismissed for its impracticality, Ma ultimately opted for English.



## SHOW US THE STRAIGHT PATH

A reference to the Arabic language and to the Muslim culture and religion most common amongst the refugees was however made in the sentence that the artist decided to write on the raincoats. The sentence read: "Show us the straight path", which is the sixth verse of the opening Surah of the Qu'ran. It was both a remark and a wish. As a remark, it stated that despite the tortuous road that these migrants have followed across Turkey, Greece, the Balkans and beyond, they are the ones that can show others the straight path – particularly to those that had comfortably flown into Belgrade for the Festival, to then fly back out again, to countries that the migrants in Belgrade will likely never reach. The hope, or wish, which sounded almost like an incitement, was that all the migrants, despite their difficulties, would have a quick and successful journey to their planned destinations. The choice of sentence indeed was inspired by a video that had appeared on YouTube a few days before the performance and that had shown a young Syrian man singing at an open-mic session in Berlin's Mauerpark, speaking of his successful journey to Germany (<https://youtu.be/DLSRIwLARL4>).

Although Ma's initial thought was to write the sentence in bold characters and on the outside of the raincoats, he soon realised that this could have been an additional sign of stigma for the migrants, who already carry the heavy labels of 'refugee' or 'migrant', not to mention the more derogatory terms they can be given. Furthermore, a highly recognisable sign such as a text on a raincoat could have made the refugees more traceable during their journey, which could cause them trouble in both their countries of origin and destination. This is why Ma decided to take the raincoats out of their plastic bags, turn them inside out, and write the sentence on the inside, before putting them back into their plastic bags as they were.



## MICRO-RESISTANCE

Although the performance was scheduled to take place at 5 PM on 3 October, in the morning of the same day Ma went to the refugee camps with an activist of European Alternatives, and distributed the raincoats one by one. Ma did not reveal his identity as an artist and did not record the action on camera. Despite their initial circumspection, the migrants soon appreciated the intention of Ma and welcomed his gift. It is indeed quite a common occurrence to see citizens of all ages bringing presents to the migrants in those two parks of Belgrade. At the scheduled time of the performance, Ma presented to the audience one of the raincoats which he had kept for himself, explaining his action to the public.

In fact, as he likes to say, he does not make artistic performances, but instead carries out simple actions, which he labels as micro-interventions, which everyone can do in his or her own private life. Ma's motto "Forget art" refers exactly to these possible daily acts of "micro-resistance", which are not confined within the specific time

and place of an artistic performance. This characteristic makes such actions more powerful and more likely to bring changes in the hyper-controlled, post-totalitarian society of China or, as it was in this case, Serbia.



Belgrade, 3 October 2015

"Soterramento (Burial)" by Jota Mombaça

A micro-intervention by Ma Yongfeng

Curated by Luigi Galimberti

With the kind support of Marija Radoš and Miroslav Karić (Remont Gallery), Radomir Lazović, Iva Čukić and Dobrica Veselinović (Ministry of Space / Ministarstvo Prostora), Robert Kozma, Batul Hassan, Elena Biagioli, Felipe Duarte, Eva Moore and all the activists of European Alternatives.

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**LUIGI GALIMBERTI** is the Director of Transnational Dialogues.

Organised by European Alternatives, TRANSEUROPA Festival is a festival of arts, culture and politics. Since 2007, it has been opening a temporary space for people from throughout Europe to exchange, co-create and find common grounds for democracy, equality and culture beyond the nation-state.

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