

# Thinking with Conditions

from Public Programming  
to Radical Pedagogy  
in and Beyond  
Contemporary Art

Janna Graham  
Department Visual Cultures  
Goldsmiths College  
University of London  
Phd Visual Cultures/Curatorial Knowledge

## **Declaration of Authorship**

I, Janna Graham hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed:

Date: 22 September, 2017

## Abstract

*Thinking With Conditions: From Public Programming To Radical Pedagogy In And Beyond Contemporary Art* is a study of the contradictions and possibilities of public programming. Charting a rise in discursive events in galleries since the 1990s, (called public programming), the thesis analyses the claims made for these events as moments in which to create alternative enactments of the public sphere and poses alternatives.

The thesis posits that in our current moment such claims are overshadowed by a mode of post-Fordist production that propels individual, virtuosic and communicative performances, regularly detaching a political kind of speech from meaningful political action. I argue that in this tendency, described by Paulo Virno as 'publicness without a sphere' public programming joins a suite of other 'public' practices that enact a public pedagogy in which its agents learn to detach passionate and politicised speech from practices in their life worlds. I call this tendency *thinking without conditions*.

Part I of the thesis examines instances of *thinking without conditions* in public programming in the arts, and in fields like Education and the Law. Drawing from the work of Paulo Freire, archives of popular education in Latin America and genealogies of Institutional Pedagogy in France, Part II of the thesis argues for *thinking with conditions*, through radical pedagogy practices that more meaningfully connect what is said and what can be acted upon.

Each chapter is structured around anecdotes drawn from experience working in the fields of public programming through which I have attempted to chart the intersection of micro and macro political concerns as they manifest in everyday working practices. Throughout the thesis I argue that practices of organisation — though often eclipsed by more heroic narratives and thematics in public programmes — are crucial to understanding how radical change can and does take place.

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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis works through the contradictions and possibilities associated with public programming in and beyond contemporary arts institutions. It is first, a situated investigation of public programmes in arts institutions in European and North American contexts, a field that I have operated within as an educator and curator for over 20 years. Second, it explores and analyses 'public programming' as a public pedagogy within neoliberal economic and social formations that subsume collective speaking and thinking into mechanisms of capitalist value production, with often violent effects. Third, the thesis proposes ways in which to think and practice beyond this subsumption into other configurations of public programming, through an engagement with genealogies of radical pedagogy and contemporary case studies. The thesis is guided by three questions:

- Why are opportunities for public speaking and thinking on urgent social and political issues so frequently separated from action in the field of public programming and the sites in which those issues are most implicated?
- How do we name and analyse the circumstances in which this separation occurs?
- What genealogies of public education and political organising might inform a move to reconnect thought, language, and action in the fields of public programming?

These questions will be explored in the thesis, through a two-part structure. In Part I, titled *Thinking Without Conditions* and composed of two chapters, I will examine the implications of the separation between what Paulo Virno describes as a 'political kind' of speech and political action through examples of public programming within but also outside of the arts.<sup>1</sup> Through theoretical terms developed by Virno and others, I will read particular instances of public programming for these separations. Are the separations between the rhetorics of public programming and its practicable actions intentional, are they hypocritical, are those engaged in producing public programming disingenuous, or can we see them as broader tendencies within the contemporary subjectivities of work? In Part II, titled *Thinking with Conditions*, also composed of two chapters, I address the third question related to genealogies. Here, I weave

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<sup>1</sup> Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude* (New York: Semiotext(e), 2004), 58.

archives of popular education in Brazil and writings by Paulo Freire (Chapter 3) and the histories of Institutional Pedagogy and the Ecole Modern movement in France (Chapter 4), through contemporary case studies, to analyse the ways in which instances of public speaking and thinking might be re-oriented towards organising around the urgent contemporary issues that public programmes seek to address.

### **0.1 Reading Public Programming at the Intersections**

Contemporary art institutions employ public programming as an umbrella term that includes various kinds of initiatives, including workshops, lectures, conversations, parallel events, collective walks and research projects. Yet, it does not belong exclusively to any particular professional niche within the ecology of cultural organisations. Sometimes it falls under the remit of education departments, encompassing activities geared towards educated adult audiences as distinct from young people or what are often termed 'communities'; that is people of lower income and educational background.

Public programming activities can be initiated directly by artists as part of residencies or commissions, while, at other times, curators or academic researchers name discursive events as core elaborations of their curatorial concepts. Though public discourse and adult education in art institutions have existed since their inception, public programming as a tendency has expanded significantly in European and Anglo-American contexts since the 1990s. This proliferation has coincided with a perception that the spaces for public debate of intellectual concepts have been reduced more generally, due to the increasing privatisation and individualisation of many aspects of public life. It has also coincided with a desire amongst academics and arts practitioners to expand engagements with critical theory outside of the university context.

Arts institutions, as disparate as biennials, publicly-funded organisations and art fairs, have now committed ever greater curatorial and programme resources to publicly staged discursive activities. In recent years, prominent international arts events, such as Documenta 9, Manifesta 10 and annual talking 'marathons' hosted by the Serpentine Galleries, have positioned public programming centrally as a curatorial and discursive platform, over or alongside traditional exhibition display. The narratives surrounding such moments suggest that public programmes

are instances in which to engage in 'knowledge production'<sup>2</sup> or to enact a 'public dialogue'<sup>3</sup> seen to be less available in the increasingly privatised realms that were formerly assigned to public debate.<sup>4</sup> The implications of public programming, it is suggested, operate within and outside of the art context, 'reaching new publics', but also engaging in cultural diplomacy or 'soft power', to negotiate broader political agendas.<sup>5</sup>

Given the interstitial status of public programmes — operating between disciplines, departments and demands — and the relative paucity of written material written about them — any elaboration of the contemporary significance of public programming requires a trans-disciplinary approach. My aim in this thesis is to read public programming from these intersections. I will do so with reference to three main fields of literature.

The first, are materials written in gallery, museum and curatorial studies that situate public programming within the cultural offer of arts institutions. Through this material, it is possible to understand the claims made for public programmes and their central discourses and debates.

The second, is the field surrounding questions of public debate, publicness and the public sphere. In this section, I move away from the Habermasian focus on dialogue and public opinion and towards an understanding of publicness as an operative mode within post-Fordist labour practices and subjectivities. Reading public programming through the lens of post-Fordist subjectivities de-naturalises it as something exclusive to the arts, and situates it within a broader suite of practices related to publicness and performative language production within

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<sup>2</sup> Okwui Enwezor, 'The Black Box,' in *Documenta 11\_Platform 5* (Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2002), 54.

<sup>3</sup> Grant Kester, *Conversation Pieces, Community and Communication in Modern Art* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2004), 9.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Osborne, 'Introduction' (lecture, Art and Immaterial Labour Conference, Tate Modern, London, January 19, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> Leanne Hoogwaerts, 'What Role do Museums and Art Institutions Play in International Relations Today and Specifically in the Development of What Joseph Nye Called "Soft Power"?' (paper, The Arts as Cultural Diplomacy Conference, Institute for Cultural Diplomacy, London, August 26, 2012). Hoogwaerts describes how public events related to the Vanabbemuseum's 'Picasso in Palestine' project attempted to impact the legitimacy of recognition for the State of Palestine. Other practices, such as MuseumNext, a 'peripatetic series of conferences on the future of museums' use public programmes to broker relations between knowledge conglomerates like Knowledge Quarter - a group encompassing 'academic, cultural, research, scientific and media organisations in one small area of London', with other global urban centres. See also: Aidan Dunne, 'The Future of Museums: 'Soft Power', The Hard Sell,' *The Irish Times*, April 18, 2016, <http://www.irishtimes.com/culture/art-and-design/the-future-of-museums-soft-power-and-the-hard-sell-1.2611892>.

the changing landscape that has been termed 'post-democracy'.<sup>6</sup> To do so, I engage with post-Marxist analyses offered by Paulo Virno, Isabell Lorey, Angela Mitropoulos, Brian Holmes and Franco Berardi.

The third field is that of radical pedagogy and research, whose genealogies are often themed within discussions of public programming and their association with what has been described as an 'educational turn' in curating, the implications of which are rarely explored in the practice and writing surrounding public programming.<sup>7</sup> Within the broader field of radical pedagogy, this thesis will focus on genealogies that apply to questions of collective discursive and thought production, as they are most applicable to the claims that are made about public programming as a site for public discourse and debate. This work draws heavily on the pedagogical analyses offered by Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, Fernand and Jean Oury, Aida Vasquez, Celestin Freinet and others.

Though not a field of writing, a final body of knowledge is derived from the 20 years of my own practice and experience working in arts institutions, as a curator, artist and educator involved in public programming. This analysis aims to sketch the new terrain of this emerging field of public programming, at the juncture of theory and practice, between macropolitical claims and micropolitical tensions, in order to investigate precisely the contradictions and possibilities that emerge between them.

Across these fields, I argue for *thinking with conditions* as a process that cuts across theory and practice moves between political speech and political action and operates at the junction of micropolitics and the representational realm of macropolitics. My theoretical framework is thus guided by a number of key terms that traverse the constituencies and complex fields that intersect with public programming. These include Paulo Virno's analysis of publicness as something deeply embedded in post-Fordist labour practices (Chapters 1 and 2); Gayatri

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<sup>6</sup> I am referring here to texts by Colin Crouch, *Post-democracy* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004); Wolfgang Streeck, 'The Crises Of Democratic Capitalism,' *New Left Review* 71 (Sep - Oct 2011): 5-29; and within the arts context, that offered by Hito Steyerl, 'Politics Of Art: Contemporary Art And The Transition To Post-democracy,' *ae-flux journal #21* (December 2010), <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/21/67696/politics-of-art-contemporary-art-and-the-transition-to-post-democracy/>. In these contexts the term is used to refer to the ways in which democratic mechanisms have lost efficacy.

<sup>7</sup> The so-called 'Educational Turn in Art' is described in Irit Rogoff, 'Turning,' *ue-flux journal #00* (December 1969), <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/00/68470/turning/>.

Spivak's notion of the suture (Interlude); Paulo Freire's conjunctural praxis of writing the word and the world together and Don Ihde's notion of polyphonous thinking (Chapter 3); Felix Guattari's notion of transversality; and Angela Mitropoulos' notion of the infrastructural weave (Chapter 4). These concepts support readings that take place at the intersections between literatures but also between modes of experience and articulation, between reading, writing, voicing and listening, between speaking and acting upon, and between instituting and desiring. Through them I attempt to chart a nuanced and multi-faceted approach that can contend with the complex positioning of public programming between questions of the public and political urgencies, and micropolitical questions of affect and organisation.

### 0.1.1 Public Programming in Art, Gallery and Museum Criticism

In spite of its prominence and contagion in the last decade, very little has been written about public programming. What has been written, usually by its practitioners, can be hinged around three tendencies. The first is to suggest the rise of public programming as a performative trend. Pablo Helguera, for example, suggests public programming as a site of 'experimentation' in which artists and curators work with the quality of time and, as such, produce 'instant communities.'<sup>8</sup> Helguera suggests that where artist-run collaborative spaces were central to the organisation of alternative practices in the 1970s and 80s, public programmes, facilitated by the difficulty in procuring and maintaining spaces in large urban centres, shifts the emphasis of the 'alternative' in art from space to time. Drawing from histories of performance, socially engaged and 'dialogic' art, he suggests that public programmes allow artists, curators and audiences to focus on the 'why' - the issues they seek to address - over the 'where' of their organisation. Through the temporalities of the event they can 'embrace their *raison d'être* more emphatically. This is echoed by Mick Wilson and Paul O'Neill, who suggest a curatorial movement from questions of public space (which is seen to be compromised and focused on spectacle) to practices and questions of public time.<sup>9</sup>

Others, such as the curator Sally Tallant, suggest that public programming takes place at the intersection between art production, curatorial and education work, necessitating the invention

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<sup>8</sup> Pablo Helguera, 'Alternative Audience and Instant Time: the Public Program as an Alternative Space,' in *Playing by the Rules: Alternative Thinking/Alternative Spaces* (New York: apexart, 2010).

<sup>9</sup> Paul O'Neill, 'The Curatorial As Constellation: Durational Public Art, Cohabitational Time and Attentiveness,' (lecture, Critical Issues in Public Art, Public Art Norway, Oslo, Norway, January 6, 2014), <https://publicartnorway.org/aktuelt/critical-issues-in-public-art-presents-paul-oneill/>.

of new formats for experience (workshops, retreats, carnivals) as well as new practices of production. Moving beyond the realm of the gallery educator, practitioners must now work to develop a more 'integrated' approach to programming driven by urgent social questions and artistic strategies for addressing them.<sup>10</sup>

Tallant situates the rise in public programming within a prolonged artistic and curatorial fascination with questions of education, pedagogy and the art school since the mid-2000s, described by Irit Rogoff as 'the educational turn' in art.<sup>11</sup> This 'educational turn' has produced an enormous array of exhibitions, books and public programmes, from the ill-fated *Manifesta 6 Art School* in Nicosia (2006), to the exhibition series *Academy: Learning from Art/ Learning from the Museum* at the Van Abbe, Eindhoven and MuHKA Antwerp (2006); also including *United Nations Plaza* Berlin (2006); the Hayward Gallery *De-schooling Society* (2010); *Open School East*, London (2014); and publications such as Stephen Henry Madoff's *Art School: Propositions for the 21st Century*,<sup>12</sup> and Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson's *Curating and the Educational Turn*.<sup>13</sup> These events have been accompanied by reading groups and study sessions using texts such as Jacques Rancière's *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*,<sup>14</sup> to evoke other forms and para-institutions of learning. Rather than situating themselves within art schools or other institutions of formal education, the majority of these initiatives have taken place within the auspices of public programmes in galleries, exhibitions and biennials. This educational turn, in turn, has increased the legitimacy and interest in public programming at the highest level of cultural institutions, and expanded the domain of many organisations' educational missions. Where public programmes may have been understood in the more traditional sense as the practice of producing and reproducing audiences for art institutions, by affirmatively conveying information about the art, through the 'educational turn' directors, curators and other power holders within cultural institutions have understood it as a space for gaining exposure and attaching themselves to trends in critical thought and experimentation. This

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<sup>10</sup> Sally Tallant, 'Experiments in Integrated Programming,' *Tate Papers*, No.11 (Spring 2009): 1-6.

<sup>11</sup> Rogoff, 'Turning.'

<sup>12</sup> Steven Henry Madoff, ed., *Art School: Propositions for the 21st Century* (MIT Press, 2009).

<sup>13</sup> Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson, eds., *Curating and the Educational Turn* (London, Amsterdam: Open Editions and de Appel, 2010).

<sup>14</sup> Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991).

expansion has positioned the contemporary art institution as a site for the production of contemporary knowledges relevant to other kinds of audiences not necessarily invested in artistic debates.

As I will set out in Chapter 1, this positioning of public programming as part of a trend or a 'turn' in the field of art, is also read in relation to other tendencies in the early noughties during which the notion of a 'dialogic aesthetic' in contemporary art was mobilised.<sup>15</sup> The 'turn' to dialogue in artistic practice is echoed by curators in the early 2000s, as a strategy of resistance to what Okwei Enwezor describes as, the 'optics and visual logic of contemporary art'.<sup>16</sup> 'Dialogue' was invoked to re-position artists and curators in the realm of social knowledge production and against the hierarchies of both the broader political sphere and the opacity of the arts. Taken to its extreme, for curators like Hans Ulrich Obrist, discursive platforms offered the ability to engage in ultimate openness, an 'infinite conversation'. Obrist, Tallant and others involved in the Serpentine Gallery, invented the hyper-discursive, durational format they describe as the 'marathon'. In Ulrich's words, this '24-hour polyphonic knowledge festival where all kinds of disciplines meet' was a way to engage in non-stop production on a range of topics, from manifestos to climate change.<sup>17</sup> Though differing, across all of these narratives, public programming and the dialogic within contemporary cultural production are read in largely affirmative terms. The perceived dangers of public programming predominantly centre around the degree to which they are or are not able to articulate the *why* or the *urgency* of their existence, or the degree to which they do or do not invent new formats. The overall effects of this tendency, the conditions under which it has been produced, and its situation within neoliberal practices of subjectivation more broadly, has not, to date, been addressed by these writers.<sup>18</sup>

A second area of writing around public programming within art and gallery criticism can be read through museums and gallery studies. This area of writing is focused less on the programming and more on the 'public' dimension of public programming, interrogating *who*

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<sup>15</sup> Grant Kester, 'Dialogical Aesthetics: A Critical Framework For Littoral Art,' *Variant*, No. 9 (Winter 1999/2000).

<sup>16</sup> Enwezor, 'The Black Box,' 42.

<sup>17</sup> Hans Ulrich Obrist, *Ways of Curating* (United Kingdom: Penguin, 2015), 30.

<sup>18</sup> Helguera's writing focuses on the question of the 'why' whereas Ulrich Obrist's on the question of formats. See Helguera, 'Alternative Audience and Instant Time: the Public Program as an Alternative Space,' and Obrist, *Ways of Curating*.

the 'public', the 'visitor' or the 'audience' are for public programmes. Usually pertaining to the programming of public tours and engagements within gallery spaces, this body of writing argues for 'quality' learning experiences,<sup>19</sup> and critiques the understanding of the audience as passive. Public programmes are seen as the space in which to undo the affirmative, connoisseur-based delivery of facts and engage in experimentation. However, unlike artistic and curatorial discourses, these practitioners are grounded in educational theory, arguing that galleries are sites of experiential and constructivist learning.<sup>20</sup> Such practices, it is hoped, might re-contextualise galleries and museums to produce 'discursive museums' through which visitors construct meanings using museum and gallery objects and exhibitions as catalysts.<sup>21</sup> This discursive museum can be brought into being through facilitated engagement activities,<sup>22</sup> or through processes of 'active' listening on behalf of museum and gallery guides.<sup>23</sup> Others suggest that constructivist approaches place too much emphasis on the individual and do not acknowledge the discursive power already at play in museums. These critics suggest de-colonising, deconstructive and performative approaches to public programming, again most frequently addressed to the gallery tour.<sup>24</sup> Others suggest that placing such emphasis on 'dialogue' mistakenly enfolds what is thought and learned with what is said in the context of

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<sup>19</sup> Philip Wright, 'The Quality of Visitors' Experience in the Art Museum,' in *The New Museology*, ed. Peter Vergo (London: Reaktion Books, 1989), 119-48.  
John H. Falk and Lynn D. Dierking, *Learning from Museums: Visitor Experiences and the Making of Meaning* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers / AASLH, 2000).

<sup>20</sup> George E. Hein, *Learning in the Museum* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998).  
George E. Hein, 'The Constructivist Museum,' in *The Educational Role of the Museum*, ed. Eileen Hooper-Greenhill (London: Routledge, 1999), 73-79.

<sup>21</sup> Peter Noever, *The Discursive Museum* (Ostfildern-Ruit, Germany: Hatje Cantz Publishers, 2002).

<sup>22</sup> Austin Clarkson and Douglas Worts, 'The Animated Muse: An Interpretive Program for Creative Viewing,' *Curator: The Museum Journal*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (2005): 257-280.

<sup>23</sup> Eileen Hooper-Greenhill, ed., *The Educational Role of the Museum (Leicester Readers in Museum Studies)*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1999).  
Eileen Hooper-Greenhill and Theano Moussouri, *Making Meaning in Art Museums 1: Visitors' Interpretive Strategies at Wolverhampton Art Gallery* (Leicester and Wolverhampton: University of Leicester, West Midlands Regional Museums Council & Wolverhampton Art Gallery and Museum, 2001).

<sup>24</sup> Andrew Dewdney, David Dibosa and Victoria Walsh, eds., *Post Critical Museology: Theory and Practice in the Art Museum* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011).

such engagements, and propose a more psychoanalytic approach to understanding interpretive public programming.<sup>25</sup>

Increasingly within discussions of public programmes in this vein, there is a shift towards thinking about how public programmes might support broader diversity in the arts, arguing for the positioning of the 'public at the centre of the process', and the public programme as a site for the 'negotiation between diverse social entities'.<sup>26</sup> In the practice of museums and galleries, such analyses of public programmes often operate around the edges and sit contradictorily between departments of education – concerned with questions of learning and engagement – and departments of marketing and visitor services, concerned primarily with the cultivation of what Pine and Gilmore describe as 'experience economy'. Both of which are, in turn, positioned differently to the concerns of artistic or curatorial experimentation. While these approaches attempt to experiment with theorised and self-reflexive approaches to public collections and public tours, they are often interventions focused on particular collections and learning styles within the confines of a particular format. For the most part, they exist within the envelope of cultural institutions in their current form and do not address the modes of governance or dynamics of power at play in public programmes and cultural production more generally. While informed by these approaches, this thesis addresses public programming in a wider sense – in its formulation as a site from which to address contemporary urgent social and cultural questions that move beyond more conventional forms of gallery and museum pedagogy.

The emergent field of 'critical gallery education' does however engage with the public dimension of public programming and attempts to critically intervene in the discourses around gallery education. 'Critical gallery education', also sometimes known as 'critical mediation', is composed of writers who are, in many cases, also practitioners, and who argue that the

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<sup>25</sup> See Helene Illeris, 'Museums and Galleries as Performative Sites for Lifelong Learning: Constructions, De-constructions and Reconstructions of Audience Positions in Museum and Gallery Education,' *Museum and Society*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (2006): 15-26; and Jane Deeth, 'Engaging Strangeness in the Art Museum: an Audience Development Strategy,' *Museum and Society*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (2012): 1-14.

<sup>26</sup> Kimberly Keith, 'Putting the "Public" in Public Programs – An Inclusive Approach to Program Development in Museums,' *Cultural Policy, Criticism and Management Research*, City University London, accessed March 2017, [https://culturalpolicyjournal.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/ejournal\\_kimberly\\_keith.pdf](https://culturalpolicyjournal.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/ejournal_kimberly_keith.pdf).

'unglamorous tasks' of the gallery educator have been under-theorised.<sup>27</sup> Carmen Mörsch, a proponent of this position, in her reading of histories of gallery education, suggests that gallery education operates as a 'dispositive' at the intersection of four contradictory discourses. These include affirmative and reproductive discourses that align gallery pedagogy with bourgeois interests and the affirmation of galleries and museums within the projects of colonialism and paternalism (and increasingly neoliberalism), and more deconstructive and transformative provocations that align with progressive education and emancipatory social movements.<sup>28</sup> Defined here as a terrain of struggle with conflicting and contradictory ideologies, Mörsch and others position gallery education as a site of research in which to test approaches to public engagement, informed by queer theory, and praxes of decolonisation and anti-capitalism. In a collaborative facilitation of practice-based research at Documenta12, for example, such 'critical' gallery educators initiated and documented investigative processes within public programming, probing the degree to which interactions with the public could be understood as sites of active research into processes of institutional and social change.

This thesis follows this critical approach in theorising active research in galleries and in understanding education practices in galleries as a site of struggle. While writings in critical mediation focus on the role of the gallery educator, I address public programming as an interstitial practice that exists *between* a number of departments and roles in and outside of galleries, and also in its specific embodiment of post-Fordist labour practices focused on publicness, performativity, collective speech and thought production.

A fourth area of importance in a reading of public programming addresses the broader context of the arts in relation to post-Fordism and neoliberalism. While not directed at public programming *per se*, a growing body of literature critically reads the movement towards the social, the political, the 'radical' and the 'urgent' in arts institutions, of which public programming is one iteration. Influenced by post-Marxist analysis and the writings of Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari and Antoni Negri, this literature situates the use of political thematics in arts institutions as an iteration of the governing strategies of neoliberal society. It suggests that the art world's interest in political and 'urgent' thematics might be characterised as a 'liar's

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<sup>27</sup> Nora Sternfeld, 'Unglamorous Tasks: What Can Education Learn from its Political Traditions?' *e-flux journal* #14 (2010), <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/14/61302/unglamorous-tasks-what-can-education-learn-from-its-political-traditions/>.

<sup>28</sup> Carmen Mörsch, ed., *Documenta 12 Education: Between Critical Practice and Visitor Services: Results of a Research Project* (Diaphanes, 2009).

poker'<sup>29</sup> in which urgent political content is staged without addressing political contexts. This tendency in contemporary art is positioned within broader neoliberal tendencies that foster 'flexible' subjectivities and engender the habitual separation between a political kind of 'speech' and particular political actions. In the context of neoliberalism, such critics argue that rhetorics of the 'political', political sensations and experiences are 'pimped' to produce a theatre of political engagement and are blocked - at the level of subjectivity and through forms of governance such as boards of directors - from social and political provocation and antagonism.<sup>30</sup>

More recently, it has been suggested by some critics that the de-linking of political themes from political actions is not only fostered as part of this general neoliberal tendency of 'lying' but is, by now, a systematic collusion between corporations, governments and arts organisations to 'artwash' their public image.<sup>31</sup> Recent interventions at biennial events, including protests staged in the lead-up to the 13<sup>th</sup> Istanbul Biennial, which was themed around 'public alchemy' (2013), and more recently in response to Documenta14's public programme in Athens (2017) titled 'the parliament of bodies', indicates a growing awareness of a distance between the political language of such events – their claims to critically informed thematics, openness, democracy, public debate, radical change – and their fundamental role within processes of gentrification, urban displacement and corporate expansion in the specific localities in which they emerge.<sup>32</sup> In the words of anthropologist Elpida Rikou, 'Art production today has to think about the relationship between grassroots projects and the institutions that adopt the same language'.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Brian Holmes, 'Liar's Poker. Representation of Politics/Politics of Representation,' *Springerin*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (January 2003).

<sup>30</sup> Suely Rolnik, 'The Geopolitics of Pimping,' *Transversal*, 1106 (October 2006), <http://eipcp.net/transversal/1106/rolnik/en>.

<sup>31</sup> See Mel Evans, *Artwash: Big Oil and the Arts* (PlutoPress, 2015); and Boyle Heights Alliance Against Artwashing and Displacement (website), <http://alianzacontraartwashing.org/en/bhaaad/>, for examples of analyses of art washing in the context of the oil industry and gentrification.

<sup>32</sup> Artists Against Evictions, 'Open Letter to the Viewers, Participants and Cultural Workers of Documenta 14,' *e-flux conversations*, April 8, 2017. <http://conversations.e-flux.com/t/open-letter-to-the-viewers-participants-and-cultural-workers-of-documenta-14/6393>.

<sup>33</sup> Elpida Rikou as quoted in Risa Puleo, 'The Messy Politics of Documenta's Arrival in Athens,' *Hyperallergic*, No. 10 (April, 2017).

While pertinent to public programming, these critical readings in the broader field of art and politics largely centre around international exhibition projects, leaving the specificity of ongoing institutional public programmes and their claims to the urgent, the public, the experimental, 'the real estate of time' and to 'dialogue', under-examined.

In Chapters 1 and 2 of this thesis, the specific claims and desires around public programming will be read beyond the affirmative discussion amongst practitioners and in relation to this wider analysis of 'pimping', 'art-washing' and broader neoliberal tendencies within and outside of the arts. Public programmes, through this lens, can be seen to exceed the stated intentions of artists, curators and educators, and can be read in relation to what Henry Giroux describes as a 'public pedagogy'<sup>34</sup> that cultivates particular modes of subjectivation – a sense of urgency, a frenzy of discussion or 'infinite conversation' – while disabling a translation of these issues into actions.<sup>35</sup> I call this separation *thinking without conditions*. Readings of 'dialogue', 'debate' and 'the public' in the wider context of neoliberalism will be used to crucially de-naturalise public programming as a 'trend' emerging only out of the discursive field of the arts, and rather as symptomatic of broader questions of social and political economy in the present.

#### 0.1.2 Public Programming and Neoliberal Practices of 'Public' Thinking and Speaking without Conditions

Suely Rolnik, Brian Holmes, Hito Steryl and others have observed and articulated in various ways what I describe as this increasing slippage between the language of political urgency and practices of political struggle in the arts. In a related manifesto written by Stuart Hall, Michael Rustin and Doreen Massey, Massey goes so far as to say that political speech, and terms like 'liberty', 'public', and 'equality', have been 'hijacked' from their histories within the struggles of liberal democracy and re-framed solely in relation to economic concerns.<sup>36</sup> This 'hijacking' has been read in relation to the spread of neoliberal ideology and its re-framing of relationships of citizens and publics as consumers and prosumers (producers and consumers), who actively

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<sup>34</sup> Henry A. Giroux, 'Public Pedagogy And The Politics Of Neo-Liberalism: Making The Political More Pedagogical,' *Policy Futures in Education*, Vol. 2, No. 3-4 (2004): 494-503.

<sup>35</sup> Henry A. Giroux, 'Cultural Studies, Public Pedagogy and the Responsibility of Intellectuals,' *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* Vol. 1, No. 1 (March 2004): 12.

<sup>36</sup> Doreen Massey, 'Neoliberalism has Hijacked our Vocabulary,' in The Guardian online Tuesday June 11, 2013. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jun/11/neoliberalism-hijacked-vocabularyAnalysis> (last accessed 13 September, 2017).

participate in the making of their own experiences as product or production of capital.<sup>37</sup> Judith Butler's analysis of the 'performative', in which a speech act 'enacts or produces that which it names',<sup>38</sup> suggests that speaking politics within the context of a culture dominated by market is less a hijacking and more a mode of production that naturalises the discrepancy between words and their histories, thus producing new governing realities. However, theories of performativity and speech act theory, more generally, can isolate speech acts from the broader organisational, social and political configurations in which they are situated. Though Butler's more recent work attempts to broaden the theory of performativity, suggesting that assemblies of physical bodies have an expressive dimension that cannot be reduced to speech, the question of voicing and 'making an account of oneself' in the public realm of 'appearance', remain central to her thought.<sup>39</sup> Although a valuable constituent part of my analysis of public programming, at the end of Chapter 1, I argue that an over-emphasis on speech acts, voicing and modes of public assembly, fails to address the complexity of conditions that are at play in the production of public programmes and can be read in itself as symptomatic of thinking *without* conditions. I suggest here that analyses of the speech acts and performativity of public programming, must be woven through a series of intersecting conditions, that include both questions of public speaking and thinking but also the dynamics of listening, questions of affect, organisation and care that are often identified as existing within the realm of the private.

The positioning of affect, organisation and care as constituent elements of thinking is informed by the notion of transversality in the writing of Felix Guattari. A transversal approach rejects the notion of language and its performativity as having been hijacked by capitalist ideology. The notion of transversality suggests, instead, a deeper and more reticular set of relations between semiotics and capitalism. It is used here to indicate that capital itself moves between registers of signification (or representation) and a-signifying production (money, information, affect, etc.).

Paulo Virno argues, through Hannah Arendt, that distinctions have been eroded between the realm of political speech and action (the public sphere), the realm of private thought (private sphere) and that of the commodified sphere of labour. He says that in post-Fordist production,

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<sup>37</sup> Marnie Holborow, 'Language, Ideology and Neoliberalism,' *Journal of Language and Politics*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (2007): 51-73.

<sup>38</sup> Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 232.

<sup>39</sup> Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (Harvard University Press, 2015), 88.

these three realms, in effect, collapse into each other. Virno suggests that the resulting severing of political speech from the sphere of action is less a 'hi-jacking' of political rhetorics and more an incorporation of both the public and the private spheres into the realm of capitalist value production read as labour.

Calls to the public, to public debate or the public sphere like those mobilised within public programming, cannot be realised, insofar as this public sphere, the 'sphere' of speech and action are, in effect, the space of endless communicative, performative and competitive work. The perceived belief in the power of both performative experimentation, dialogue and speaking in public, that lies at the heart of affirmative notions of public programming, are rendered here as what Virno describes as 'publicness without a public sphere'.<sup>40</sup>

Virno's analysis of 'publicness without a public sphere' has significant ramifications for public programming and its claims to provide platforms for public dialogue and debate. In Chapter 1, I examine this problem with platforms, looking closely at the emergence of the platform (for dialogue, debate and speaking out) as a trope in public programming in the arts but also in fields such as law and education. I analyse how an arguably misplaced attachment to the notion of the public sphere is used to discipline, dissociate and actively sever relationships between political speech and action. I suggest that a deep and disabling violence can result from such severing activities, one that untethers emancipatory political speech from emancipatory consequence, and actively deters communities of struggle from making meaningful use of the platforms they have been afforded.

While Virno's analysis is useful for troubling the terms and motivations surrounding the definition of publicness mobilised by public programming, in Chapter 2, I question his emphasis on the public and performative aspects of labour, over the 'private' and reproductive conditions that have also been subsumed within its disciplinary modes of value production. I draw on the work of Isabell Lorey and Angela Mitropoulos, to explore questions of reproduction and organisation that are eclipsed in the analyses of Virno, Nick Couldry and others, who persistently foreground voice, speech and performativity in their diagnoses of neoliberalism and, in Couldry's case, prescriptions for a post-neoliberal world. Lorey suggests that Virno's limitations stem from his reading of Hannah Arendt, who 'banishes care for life -

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<sup>40</sup> Paolo Virno, 'Publicness of the Intellect. Non-State Public Sphere and the Multitude,' *Transversal*, 0605 (January 2001), <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0605/virno/en>.

and consequently also the safeguarding of existential precariousness and concomitant care work - to the private household'.<sup>41</sup> Mitropoulos suggests that the public and private spheres have infrequently observed this separation and have, in many historical circumstances - including our own - been entangled in a more complex arrangement of what she calls, 'contagions' and contracts'.<sup>42</sup>

Rather than suggesting a replacement for the 'public sphere', that posits the voice as central and replicates the separation between 'home' and 'public' work, I ask, through Lorey and Mitropoulos, how we can re-compose public *and* private, thought *and* conditions in tandem. Can we position public programming as a space that does not only facilitate public speech, but that also works against the reproduction of those hierarchies and separations?

Analysed in these terms, the field of public programming would allow us to respond to particular sets of conditions, conditions that are often very present but rarely named or articulated within practice. Through an analysis of conditions, public programming can be seen precisely as the site of struggle between affirmative, governmentalised knowledge, and critically, collectively articulated knowledge that seeks to name and intervene in neoliberal dynamics and forms. I suggest that in this struggle, critical theorists and practitioners of public programming inhabit a particular set of conditions that can open onto questions of collective political speech and thought, *and* questions of reproduction, care and affect, linking the historically differentiated private and public spheres. This context reveals that what is required is not another public sphere, nor heroic statements of rupture, but a praxis of thinking *with* conditions, of public thought and speech that can name, act upon and alter the conditions in which we are living.

At the end of Chapter 2, I argue that we move away from this conception of 'spheres' that have become 'hollowed out shells' within the context of post-democracy and towards the practice of thinking with conditions; by naming and working through the conditions we are in and by developing other conceptions of collective mobilisation. With Mitropoulos and feminist

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<sup>41</sup> Isabell Lorey, *State of Insecurity: Government of the Precarious* (New York, London: Verso Books, 2015), 17.

<sup>42</sup> Angela Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion* (New York: Minor Compositions, 2012), 18.

concepts like 'the expanded public sphere'<sup>43</sup> and 'municipal housekeeping',<sup>44</sup> I argue that *thinking with conditions* can conjoin performative practices of speaking and thinking with questions of organisation, infrastructure and care, and thus configure their relationships differently. I propose that it is this linking that could be *both* the subject and practice of public programming.

In Part II, I move into active analysis of how to occupy public programming with the propositions of Part I in mind. To do this, I engage with the third area of literature that underpins this thesis: genealogies of critical or 'radical' pedagogy, and outline what they bring to the discussion of contradictions and struggles in the field of public programming.

### 0.1.3 Public Programming and Radical Pedagogy, or *Thinking with Conditions*

Recently published primary research in both art criticism<sup>45</sup> and Adult Education Studies<sup>46</sup> has investigated the genealogical terrain of radical and popular education within the practices of public and adult education programmes in galleries. This research has suggested that such genealogies offer important insight into the stakes of the struggle for a more emancipatory approach to public programming. Felicity Allen, in her autobiographical account of the development of the growth of gallery education in the UK in the late 1970s and early 80s has also narrated the important role that pedagogies of the feminist and anti-colonial movements played in mobilising a generation of (mostly women) to push for more democratised approaches to museum and gallery education and the degree to which these histories have been obscured in the passage through neo-liberalisation.<sup>47</sup> These recent excavations echo my

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<sup>43</sup>Stall, Susan and Randy Stoecker. 'Community Organizing or Organizing Community? Gender and the Crafts of Empowerment.' *Gender and Society*, Vol. 12, No. 6, Special Issue: Gender and Social Movements, Part 1 (Dec, 1998): 729-756. Sage Publications, Inc. p730

<sup>44</sup> *ibid*

<sup>45</sup> Hannah Martin-Merchant, 'Engaging Publics with Arts Institutions: The Frameworks of a Feminist Pedagogy,' *n.paradoxa*, Vol. 39 (January 2017): 56-64.

<sup>46</sup> D. E. Clover, 'Adult Education for Social and Environmental Change in Contemporary Public Art Galleries and Museums in Canada, Scotland and England' *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (2015): 300-315.

D. E. Clover and K. Sanford, *Lifelong Learning, the Arts and Community Cultural Engagement in the Contemporary University* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).

D.E. Clover, et al., *Adult Education, Museums and Art Galleries: Animating Social, Cultural and Institutional Change* (Sense Publishers, 2016).

<sup>47</sup> Felicity Allen, 'Situating Gallery Education,' *Tate Encounters [E]dition 2*, February 2008, <http://www2.tate.org.uk/tate-encounters/edition-2/papers.shtm>.

own entry into the field of gallery pedagogy through the work of the Canadian Marxist and feminist theatre educator Judith Mastai, at the very moment in which questions of democracy and 'the public' were being re-tooled around neoliberal modes of value production. These genealogies suggest that radical education histories might offer something to this complex field of contemporary public programming that goes beyond nostalgic notions of the public and techniques that sit comfortably within neoliberal modes of production.

I ask how practices of radical pedagogy can support a movement from public programmes in their current instantiation, toward resistant processes of social transformation? Through what processes can we learn to speak and think with conditions? How might words, rendered meaningless in the flurry of political sounding chatter of public programming events, come to find other, more proximate relationships to the conditions we inhabit and would often like to change?

Such questions have been the pre-occupations of radical pedagogies that have emerged at various times and places across the twentieth century. While disparate in context and described under headings such as 'radical education', 'popular education'; 'critical literacy', 'feminist pedagogy', 'indigenous pedagogy'; 'institutional pedagogy', 'anti-racism'; 'institutional psychotherapy', 'militant research', 'cultural studies', 'critical adult education' and 'participatory action research' amongst others, these practices share a desire to link learning with projects of social struggle and language with concrete, liberatory changes in the life-worlds of their practitioners. Their genealogies possess many differences and do not constitute a canon as such, nor are they bound by geography, discipline, era or cause, but rather a shared set of commitments to thinking with conditions in an attempt to intervene in and alter them.

Broadly speaking, these praxes align themselves with the Marxist project of dialectical thought and action, and of liberation from capital and colonisation. They are however, also defined by their rejection of tendencies in leftist, more dogmatic party politics, such as practices of one-directional learning and the erasure of differences between metropole and margin, and their dis-interest in the role played by desire and the micropolitics of political organisation. These genealogies of radical pedagogy are, in this sense, distinct from both the pedagogies associated with the delivery of party messages, but also from the field of so-called 'progressive education' espoused by Montessori, Steiner, Piaget and others, for whom questions of power, centre-periphery relations, class antagonism and the equitable distribution of resources are not

central concerns. I mention them briefly here, but in Chapters 3 and 4 these praxes of radical education will be more fully elaborated.

Theorists of radical pedagogy often use these genealogies to engage with questions of dialogue and the public sphere as articulated by Habermas and Arendt.<sup>48</sup> For example, within the spectrum of writing surrounding 'public pedagogy', which draws from many of the genealogies described above and is a term that I mobilise throughout this thesis, there can be an over-emphasis on the voice and a prioritisation of the public over the 'private', considered to be the interior and individualised aspects of life. While the notion of 'public pedagogy' mobilises radical education histories beyond the needs of teachers and others involved in the fields of formal education, I argue that radical pedagogies are important precisely because they posit concerns with social reproduction, and with care and the organisation of life, alongside those 'public' attributes of speech, thought and action, to produce new subjectivities, new infrastructures and new realities.

In this sense, my argument follows the work of Marta Malo de Molina, who positions radical pedagogy and research practices equally within questions of collective language and knowledge production and as an antidote to the neo-liberal problematics like those described by Virno. Malo de Molina plots a number of genealogies of radical education under the heading 'common notions', suggesting that such pedagogies emerge from a common need for self-organised groups to produce their own processes of knowledge production oriented towards the generation of infrastructures of hope and survival. As such, they ignore distinctions between theory and practice, between 'private' and 'public', and instead organise themselves around what is useful to the project of social transformation.<sup>49</sup>

Against Virno's speech-making virtuoso, these genealogies of radical education or thinking with conditions, foreground the social production and collective learning of marginalised groups, or

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<sup>48</sup> Henry A. Giroux, 'Cultural Studies in Dark Times: Public Pedagogy and the Challenge of Neoliberalism,' *Fast Capitalism*, 1.2 (2005), <http://www.fastcapitalism.com/>.

<sup>49</sup> Marta Malo de Molina, 'Common Notions, Part 1: Workers-inquiry, Co-research, Consciousness-raising,' trans. Maribel Casas-Cortés and Sebastian Cobarrubias, of the Notas Rojas Collective, *Transversal*, 0406 (April 2004), <http://transform.eipcp.net/transversal/0406/malo/en>; and Marta Malo de Molina, 'Common Notions, Part 2: Institutional Analysis, Participatory Action-Research, Militant Research,' trans. Maribel Casas-Cortés and Sebastian Cobarrubias, of the Notas Rojas Collective, *Transversal*, 0707 (August 2004), <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0707/malo/en>.

what can be extrapolated from the writing of Isabell Lorey as the 'virtuosity' of 'acting together'.<sup>50</sup>

While I have, in the research for this dissertation, surveyed a number of radical pedagogical traditions both individually and in the context of collective research with groups like the Radical Education Forum,<sup>51</sup> and the Another Roadmap School, here I limit my engagements to two particular genealogies to which questions of collective language and thought production are central.<sup>52</sup> In Chapter 3, I analyse genealogies of the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the name of book written by Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire in 1969 that catalysed a movement of popular education practitioners within a number of social movements of the global south whose work cannot be attributed to the writing of an individually authored text. Groups, including the literacy movements of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, the anti-colonial education programmes of Guinea Bissau and Tanzania, and theatre practitioners operating under the heading 'theatre of the oppressed', share a commitment to what Freire describes as the 'reading of the world and the word' together.<sup>53</sup>

As I will demonstrate, this social approach to linguistic production suggests a transversal and multi-fold relationship between the production of language, analysis, action, group and world. Chapter 3 provides a detailed response to the separations produced by the subsumption of our communicative capacities into labour addressed in Chapters 1 and 2, via the genealogies of popular education. It addresses questions of naming, listening, affect and temporality, to suggest a 'polyphonic' approach to thinking with conditions. These genealogies are read in relation to a specific case study in which I was engaged as a guest public programmes curator for an institution in the south of England which, through collaboration with the sound art collective 'Ultra-red', used popular education practices with groups experiencing racist violence.

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<sup>50</sup> Lorey, *State of Insecurity: Government of the Precarious*, 129.

<sup>51</sup> Radical Education Forum, *Radical Education Workbook* (London: Ultra-red and the Radical Education Forum, 2012), <http://undercommoning.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/ref-workbook.pdf>.

<sup>52</sup> Another Roadmap (webpage), <http://colivre.net/another-roadmap/>.

<sup>53</sup> Paulo Freire and Loretta Stover, 'The Importance of the Act of Reading,' *The Journal of Education*, Vol. 165, No. 1 (Winter 1983): 10. This concept is also elaborated in Paulo Freire and Donaldo Macedo, 'MLiteracy: Reading the Word and the World,' *Thinking: The Journal of Philosophy for Children*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (1998): 8-10.

The second genealogy with which I will engage emerges earlier in the twentieth century in rural schools in France. Described in some places as the 'Freinet' movement, after its first writers/practitioners Elise and Celestin Freinet, and in other places as the 'Ecole Moderne' or the 'Modern School' movement. I am particularly interested in its extension into secondary schools and adult education contexts in post-Second World War France under the headings 'Institutional Pedagogy' and 'Institutional Psychotherapy', or together as 'Institutional Analysis' (IA). Practitioners and theorists of IA, including Ferdinand Oury, Aida Vasquez, Jean Oury and Felix Guattari and Jacques Pain linked the construction of infrastructural and reproductive elements or 'techniques for living', as Freinet called them, to the production of language, subjectivity and desire. Crucially for this thesis, the genealogy of Ecole Moderne offers a set of complex praxes (techniques and theorisations) that I use to re-work the context of public programming, the institutions across which it operates, the practices of labour it adopts and the field of knowledge production it generates.

To ground this genealogy in the present, I draw from case studies associated with my time as the curator of the 'Centre for Possible Studies', a public programme transformed into a radical education and research project in London's Edgware Road area.

Across these two examples, I suggest that praxes of radical pedagogy or *thinking with conditions* provoke profound shifts in both the modes of cultural and curatorial production that have become dominant to neo-liberal conceptions of public, collective speaking and thinking. I work these genealogies through the case studies, to develop another conceptual and theoretical framework for public programming, but also to think with *their* conditions; the concrete praxes they offer for creating new conditions of the possible.

## **0.2 Methodologies/Praxes**

In this thesis, I situate questions of public programming across micro and macro political concerns. I argue for attention to these different registers but also attempt to perform this attention throughout the thesis, moving from the anecdotal to the analytic. By bridging or

'suturing' these modes of attention this thesis is placed within the realm of situated and experimental research, mobilised by multiple occupations of the field of public programming.<sup>54</sup>

At times, the occupation of different vantage points produces different tones and voices in the thesis that are not always comfortable or compatible with one another. There are echoes of the voice of the autonomous intellectual, someone outside of the situation of public programming attempting to persuade, through argumentation and claims to original thought. At other times, the text bears the imprint of deep and collective inhabitation, of someone wrenching analysis from within emergent group processes. Where possible, I have attempted to note these discrepancies, using the confusion of voices as the basis for analytic work. I do not take the position of a removed or 'neutral' analyst but as a positioned and deeply implicated one. It is from the conflicts and contradiction of this implication, I argue, that a practice of thinking with conditions might emerge.

What are these different positions? The first is that of a community organiser who has worked for many years at the intersection of struggles of urban space and anti-racism. For nearly a decade I was an ally within indigenous land struggles in Canada and, for as many years, have been involved in political organising around precarious working conditions and refugee and migration policy and their intersection with gentrification processes in the UK. My engagements with these fields have lent me a series of tools that are both described and performed in this thesis, and a series of investments that attune my interests to the details of organisation that the case studies and genealogies provide.

As an organiser, I have made use of research methods that emerge from Freire's concept of reading of the word and the world together.<sup>55</sup> Though Freire insists his writings are not to be considered methodological, it can be said that certain attributes are common amongst practitioners of popular education in the positioning and orientation of research. Practitioners – community organisers and researchers, activists and sometimes academics – move between organic theorisation from lived conditions, and those developed within fields of more formalised configurations of knowledge existing within disciplinary frameworks and more abstract theoretical traditions. Freire describes this as 'problem posing' research, where the

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<sup>54</sup> I will elaborate this term in the Interlude between chapters 2 and 3 via the writing of Gayatri Spivak.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*

imperative is to begin with problems in the life world and to test possible respondent actions.<sup>56</sup> Researchers informed by *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and the concept of 'reading the word and the world' together, those affiliated with Participatory Action Research in its anti-colonial formations (addressed in more detail in Chapter 3), propose that such practices work through cycles of reflection, analysis and action. Rather than constructing knowledge within a field of disciplinary research, they work within what Freire refers to as a 'scope': conjunctions of time and space in which problems are posed and possible responses staged.

The two-part structure of this thesis reflects this by moving from a set of reflections to analyses, actions and reflections on those actions. Specific methodologies have been used to engage at all of these levels. For example, in Chapter 3, I describe a process based in image work or the making of scenes, which draws from Augusto Boal's activation of the 'Theatre of the Oppressed'.<sup>57</sup> These scenes, through bearing some affinity to the 'scene' as it is used in Bourdieu and Gielen, are used by participants naming a problem and developing a collective analysis of a situated question from multiple perspectives. Gielen argues that the 'scene' (the art scene, theatre scene, gay scene, etc.) is a valuable site for analysis in accommodating 'heterodox forms' like creativity and criminality.<sup>58</sup> Here, the collectives with which I am engaged use the scene at the micro scale of an utterance, incident or anecdote to unpack the heterodox forces that cut across the moments through which post-Fordist subjectives are naturalised and habituated. I narrate these scenes through field notes and my own participation in their analysis. Many of these scenes and particularly those developed within the framework of the case studies, were generated not only for the purposes of this thesis, but to directly infuse political struggle.

A second position from which this thesis emerges is from that of a worker and an insider to the world of public programming, attempting to engage with contemporary art and cultural institutions self-reflexively. Through this lens, I have used methodologies drawn from the field of Institutional Pedagogy. As will be explored in Chapter 4, Institutional Pedagogy presents a number of tools and orientations for those engaged in questioning both the micro and macro

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<sup>56</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 53-68.

<sup>57</sup> Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed* (Pluto Press, 1979)

<sup>58</sup>Pascal Gielen The Art Scene. A Clever Working Model for Economic Exploitation? in Open - A Precarious Existence. Vulnerability in the Public Domain, No.17, 2009 [https://kruzok.files.wordpress.com/2011/02/citanje\\_021.pdf](https://kruzok.files.wordpress.com/2011/02/citanje_021.pdf) (last accessed September 20, 2017)

political relations that traverse institutions. One such approach I have utilised is the creation of 'institutional monographs' – short reflective texts about institutional experiences written with the aim of working through the detail and analysing the role of small or large actions that excavate the political fabric of work. Produced generally for the purposes of group or collaborative practices of instituting, here, like collectively produced 'scenes' in Chapters 3, they are somewhat abstracted into the formal operations of a PhD text. While sharing attributes with some versions of auto-ethnography and participant observation, the monographs or field notes of Institutional Pedagogy are particular to practices of 'common' or 'militant' research, insofar as their orientation is toward analysis and action by workers, inhabitants or those affected by an institution seeking to change the conditions of its production. The work of Institutional Pedagogy is, therefore, to understand institutions not as bricks and mortar occupied by people but rather as 'moulding clay' that is to be shaped through the connection between the micro, everyday psychic and subjective registers, and the macropolitical, policies, representations and architectures with which they intersect.

As I will describe in more detail in Chapter 4, many forms of analysis begin from macropolitical concerns, however Institutional Pedagogy concerns itself first with the micropolitical. As an extension of the work of Institutional Pedagogy/Analysis and the writings of Foucault, philosophers Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze developed the term 'micropolitics' to denote the organisational, affective and psychic processes associated with the production of subjectivity and social relations<sup>59</sup>. A micropolitical approach deals with the mundane and fine details of relational encounters and the concrete ways in which they become part of wider social and political phenomena. Micropolitical practices link this analysis to the composition of new transversal lines that aim to organise social and institutional life otherwise. In Chapter 4, Félix Guattari's conceptualisation of micropolitics is extended through to the notion of transversality, which insists that critical analysis can only meet its potency when it crosses and reorganises fields, knowledges and subjectivities: in this case, when it comes to bear on social fields in and beyond the institution, and into the life worlds of practitioners.

Very practically, fragments taken from my own institutional monographs or work diaries have formed the basis for the anecdotal materials introduced in this thesis. For example, in Chapters

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<sup>59</sup> Michel Foucault, 'An Aesthetics of Existence,' in *Politics, Philosophy, Culture* (Routledge, 1984), 50. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), and in the chapter 'Micropolitics and Segmentarity' in Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 1988).

1 and 2, analyses of the divergences between a 'political kind of speech' and political action are developed in relation to my engagements with a variety of institutional scenarios. These anecdotal accounts reveal a particular set of implicit and explicit hypocrisies, lies or modes of 'pretending', which lead into theorisation of the condition of pretending. Like the use of 'scenes' described above, these institutional anecdotes are offered here to propel the argument, but have also propelled my involvement in actions to change the working conditions of institutions in the widest sense, through participation in trade unions, mutual aid and autonomous groups.

Throughout this thesis, these methodologies are offered to draw from the detail and micropolitics of everyday practices. Within their use there lies an inherent conflict; in attempting to make individual claims and analysis for work that has been collectively articulated. This is a foundational contradiction in this project, of attempting to argue for paradigms of knowledge production that are generally not akin to those used in formal academic work within the auspices of a PhD. Though I am not the first to encounter this problem, it is important to say that while much of the source material for this project emerges through collective experiences of reading, writing and research, colleagues and comrades have been aware of its manifestation in my PhD work. Wherever possible I have attempted to engage in reciprocal relationships, such that the research undertaken here may be used in the course of collective work, albeit in forms different enough that this thesis could not be deemed a repetition. I have been open in my use of these case studies with those collaborating in them, have anonymised the names of those cited in these contexts, and have taken care, wherever possible, to contribute new learning into the social and political contexts that I mention.

It is important to say that what lies ahead is an attempt to engage in radical political change from a particular and modest framework. The separation of a political kind of speaking from emancipatory consequence has wide reaching implications that extend far beyond the question of public programming with which I am primarily engaged, and in which I have situated them. Public programming should be seen here as a lens through which to examine this phenomenon in some detail, a situated attempt to wade through the layers and complexities, the mire of conditions that surround our contemporary inhabitation of a world in which our collective and communicative capacities continually escape us. Both the situatedness of this analysis and the complexity of the phenomena it investigates, its navigation of both

minutia and bold strokes, can be complicated and unwieldy to narrate. But it is this unwieldiness that calls again and again to the question of conditions. The mess of them and the navigation of this mess shed light on our routes toward other ways of being, producing and working. In this thesis I performatively argue for the unwieldiness of conditions over tidier, more packaged and perhaps more ostensibly emboldened approaches to thinking about social change, publicness and the political. It is in the mess, the crux, the banal facts and dustpans of our lives that I think we might think and compose conditions that allow us to produce more joyful worlds and less coercive modes of cultural production.

# PART I

## Thinking without Conditions

## CHAPTER 1 – The Problem with Platforms

*It is a Saturday afternoon in the auditorium of one of London's largest cultural organisations. We are at a conference discussing the conditions of labour experienced by 'immaterial' workers. The lined rows of the auditorium face forward. They are full as has been the schedule of speakers, a salad of theoretical propositions, images presented on power point, performative acuity and followed by moments in which we are asked if there are 'a couple' of questions from the audience. There is a simultaneous feeling of excitement, of words articulating conditions, and of frustration, as the questions mount with little room to respond. I am sitting amongst a group of young cultural workers, whose worlds and lives breath into the subjects and tendencies being discussed. With some trepidation, one worker puts her hand up to ask a question, 'What were the immaterial labour conditions that surrounded the making of this conference?' Her question is followed by an uncomfortable silence. Eyes are rolled and dis-approving looks are exchanged with a whiff of censure. Under her breath an audience member whispers, 'how irrelevant'. Another, tut tutting to her neighbour says less quietly, 'what poor manners'. Realising the question was posed to them and not their esteemed guests, an organiser takes to the podium to quell the controversy, "'Well we think we've done a good job, thank you for your question. This is a platform for discussion are her any other questions?'"<sup>60</sup>*

In his introduction to Tate Britain's 2008 'Art and Immaterial Labour' conference, the philosopher Peter Osborne proposed that 'art spaces have become some of the only public spaces in which an alternative political critique can be made'.<sup>61</sup> The notion of the gallery as the site of public speaking, critique and collective thinking, as a *platform* for doing so, has become widespread since the 1990s. As public spaces become increasingly commercialised and universities increasingly caught up in research assessment and audit culture, art galleries and their historical association with artistic autonomy, have become increasingly understood as sites of 'public' discourse. However, at the same time they have become increasingly market

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<sup>60</sup> This episode is written by myself but based on the astute narration made by Kari Rittenbach, "Material After Lazzarato: Are We Working Yet??" *DIS Magazine*, April 2, 2012, <http://dismagazine.com/blog/31299/material-after-lazzarato-are-we-working-yet>.

<sup>61</sup> Peter Osborne, "Introduction" (lecture, Art and Immaterial Labour Conference, Tate Modern, London, January 19, 2008).

driven, not only in relation to the buying and selling of artwork or the staging of revenue generating spectacles, but in the relation to processes such as urban development and gentrification. They, like other formerly public institutions, are equated with an idea of democracy that no longer exists — an idea of democracy that, more recently, Colin Crouch, Wolfgang Streeck and others have asserted is no longer compatible with the intensification of capitalist expansion that we are inhabiting.<sup>62</sup> Crouch has warned that we are currently moving toward a post-democratic society that ‘continues to have and to use all the institutions of democracy, but in which they increasingly become a formal shell.’ In this context, he tellingly suggests that the ‘energy and innovative drive of democratic practices pass away from the democratic arena and into small circles of a politico-economic elite’.<sup>63</sup>

As I will explore in the next chapter, ‘public programming’ today, as staged discursive events produced in the name of the public, often take on this feeling of a ‘hollow shell’. The shell at once provides a space in which one can encounter the feelings, terms and performances of a kind of political urgency, while at the same time a profound separation from the social and labour hierarchies that surround them. However, the characterisation of the public sphere as the ‘hollow shell’, the ‘former’, as a ‘loss’, does not fully capture the set of issues that surround the public sphere as it is addressed in public programming. As we will also read in the next chapter, this notion of public has always upheld problematic and highly gendered distinctions between the private and the public.

‘The platform’ can be traced as one the main terms used in the realm of public programming to mobilise and perform this sense of political urgency in the cultural field. It is also a form through which galleries claim to neutrally and simply ‘bring together’ various voices, perspectives and projects. Galleries increasingly narrate discursive events in the form of public programming as offering ‘platforms’ for discussion, debate, and experimentation with pressing social issues, or as a means through which to address what Pablo Helguera suggests as the ‘why?’ of their existence.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> See Streeck, “The Crises Of Democratic Capitalism”; and Colin Crouch, “Five Minutes with Colin Crouch,” interview by Mark Carrigan, *European Politics and Policy* (blog), LSE, February 9, 2013, accessed March 10, 2016, <http://bit.ly/11V0Tg6>.

<sup>63</sup> Crouch, interview.

<sup>64</sup> Helguera, ‘Alternative Audience and Instant Time: the Public Program as an Alternative Space.’



Figure 1.1 Platform of Documenta14  
'Parliament of Bodies', 2017, photographed by Susan Kelly

The term 'platform' was first put into broad circulation by curator Okwui Enwezor in the staging of Documenta11 (2002). Through a series of public events, which he described as 'platforms', he opened up political concepts for discussion by an emerging cadre of theorists. Their aim was to contextualise the exhibition and according to Enwezor, 'describe the present location of culture and its interfaces with other complex, global knowledge systems.'<sup>65</sup> The platforms of Documenta11 were also used as a prelude to the main exhibition (the final platform), generating interest and marketing exposure in advance of the main show. Through the proposition of art 'as knowledge production', Enwezor convened four separate events on four continents around broad concepts including 'Democracy Unrealized', 'Experiments with Truth: Transitional Justice and the Processes of Truth and Reconciliation', 'Créolité and Creolization', and 'Under Siege: Four African Cities'. The location of these events was significant in that it attempted to shift the gaze of a Euro-centric art world, and to enable those who had been its object of fetishisation to look and speak back, to discuss and debate their own relationship to European colonialism beyond modernity's 'grand conclusions'.<sup>66</sup> As such, the platforms were a direct confrontation with the authority of Euro-centric curatorial paradigms. The staging of each event in a different city also reflected the growing interest in both geo-politics and urban contexts as part of the exhibition ritual. I would suggest that the platform was also used to indicate a move from the 'museological' to the 'discursive' – a context in which the sphere of art could be widened and made relevant to contemporary global politics. Enwezor claimed that the concepts put into play through the platforms might produce a 'public sphere through which to think and analyze seriously the complex network of global knowledge circuits on which interpretations of all cultural processes and research today depend...'<sup>67</sup>

Enwezor's proposition of the platform as a mechanism in the production of a diasporic and anti-colonial 'public sphere' can in part be read in relation to radical histories of education and emancipation. They could be understood as sites of adult education following on from, for instance, the work of the Birmingham Centre for Cultural Studies, which attempted to engage working class and migrant communities in collective practices of cultural discussion and

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<sup>65</sup> Enwezor, 'The Black Box,' 44.

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*, 50.



Figure 1.2 Images of the Bandung Conference 1955, Source unknown.

research.<sup>68</sup> The platforms might also be read via the history of large gatherings dedicated to debating questions of decolonisation, such as those held in relation to the non-aligned movements, i.e. the 1955 Bandung Conference,<sup>69</sup> or, more recently, the World Social forums that began in Brazil in 2001 to challenge the effects of globalisation. Enwezor has had a recurring interest in the networks and gatherings of the non-aligned movement and Documenta11 was described by one critic as the 'Bandung of contemporary art'.<sup>70</sup> The focus of the Documenta11 Platforms on 'knowledge exchange' promised exciting possibilities for less hierarchical forms of information dissemination and debate afforded by the Internet and other emerging technologies at the time, while the stated shift from the 'white cube' to the 'black box' for events, signalled the questions of performance and performativity lent to the exhibition. While all of these diverse fields, potentialities and radical histories were at play in Enwezor's platforms, he nevertheless firmly aligned them with developments in the contemporary art world. Echoing Peter Osborne, Enwezor suggested that spaces of contemporary art were some of 'the most enlightened and liberal of all cultural institutions working on the global stage.' He argued that the contemporary art world through the 1980s had responded to the 'movements of multiculturalism, feminism, and gay rights', forcing new debates 'that sought to decolonize longstanding resistance to reform by major institutions'. As such, he suggested contemporary art production brought about 'new visibility in the

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<sup>68</sup> See the Birmingham Centre for Cultural Studies Project website <http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/historycultures/departments/history/research/projects/cccs/index.aspx> (last accessed September 20, 2017)

<sup>69</sup> The most famous of these was the Bandung meeting held in 1955, which brought together a number of 'non-aligned' struggles in Africa and Asia, and was inspired by the writings of WEB Dubois and Kwame Nkrumah (neither of whom could attend) and led by 'People's Councils' based in student organisations, Pan-African groups, agricultural unions and others. More can be read in N'ori Therese Assie-Lumumba, "Behind And Beyond Bandung: Historical And Forward-Looking Reflections On South-South Cooperation," *Bandung: Journal of the Global South*, 2:11 (2015), <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40728-014-0011-5> ; and in the account offered by attendee Amin Samir, *Delinking: Towards a Polycentric World*, trans. Michael Wolfers (London, Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Zed Books, 1990).

<sup>70</sup> Most recently, Enwezor has spoken of the Bandung in discussions around his approach to the question of nationalism in his curation of the 2015 Venice Biennale, and in an opening speech for the conference at Haus der Kunst on non-western post-war art histories. See Julia Grosse and Yvette Mutumba, 'We Have To Test The Premise That Nations No Longer Matter,' *Contemporary And*, November 8, 2015, <http://www.contemporaryand.com/magazines/we-have-to-test-the-premise-that-nations-no-longer-matter> ; The reference to Documenta specifically can be found in Vik Kanwar, 'Not a Place, but a Project: Bandung, TWAIL and the Aesthetics of Third-ness,' in *Bandung, Global History and International Law: Critical Past and Pending Futures*, eds. Luis Eslava, Michael Fakhri and Vasuki Nesiah (Cambridge University Press, 2015), 6.

participation of minorities and women, consequently redrawing the borders of institutional and gallery systems'.<sup>71</sup>

While Enwezor makes powerful claims for these particular contexts and histories within contemporary art, I will argue that a largely unreconstructed notion of the public and the public sphere continues to operate and inform this figure of the platform and the work Enwezor and others claim it can do. It is also important to remember that the move Enwezor signals from a public sphere constituted by exhibition spectators to one foregrounded on discourse and knowledge production, took place alongside a wider move in the European context from 'industrial' to 'knowledge economies'. In contemporary art, this shift was symbolised and brokered through large-scale exhibitions and the framing of contemporary art centres and institutions in formerly industrial contexts as new factories for the production of the new commodities of experience, dialogue, information and knowledge. In this context, the staging of debate and discursive events can be understood as much through Paolo Virno's categories of post-Fordist labour, as through the radical histories of social forums and Bandung. How can we make sense of the deep contradictions that arise from such divergent histories, alignments and contexts? And how do particular notions of the public sphere and the operation of the platform facilitate such contradictions?

In plain terms, the platform simply means a 'raised level surface'. However, it also infers a political gravitas and performativity more consistent with its extended definition as a site in which to 'declare principles and aims'.<sup>72</sup> In the early 2000s, the platform in the art world was framed as a space in which artists and theorists might occupy this 'raised level surface' to discuss geopolitical issues. They would do so with both a general and an art-related public who wanted to be better informed in the context of this post-industrial configuration of 'public'. Contemporary art would be the place to *platform* a new politics, one not hinged to political parties, thought to be corrupt, or to trade unions thought to be out of date, or to a mainstream media thought to be ignorant to the facts or the nuanced analysis that contemporary artists and theorists could supply. The emergence of the 'platform for discussion' in contemporary art can therefore be understood partly as the production by artists, theorists, and cultural workers of an alternative public sphere at the moment of its decline. As an early iteration of the

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<sup>71</sup> Enwezor, 'The Black Box,' 53.

<sup>72</sup> 'Definition of "Platform",' Collins Dictionary, accessed August 25, 2017, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/platform>.

platform, Documenta 11 authorised their proliferation and had an unprecedented impact on both the content and formats of the art world and its related public programmes. As someone working within a large-scale museum at the time, I can attest that this proliferation of platforms also contributed to a wider acceptance of pedagogical practices in the art world, and an interest in education that has expanded since the 1990s, and most recently manifested in the so-called 'educational turn' in curating.

The complex aims of Documenta 11's platforms — at once emancipatory and promotional, anti-colonial and expansionist, hierarchal and horizontal — position the platform at the heart of a number of contradictions that have since intensified. Today, it is much more common for public programmes to be experienced as a whirring set of political urgencies and themes that rarely directly engage the spaces and communities in which they are situated, let alone the struggles that surround the issues that are discussed. Speakers, swept in for one or two days, are disconnected from the contexts in which they are speaking. Ideas are exchanged without a sensible trace beyond the event and its associated documentation. Unlike the Bandung conference, social forums and other resistant public gatherings at the turn of the last century, little effort is put towards connecting those who speak of particular conditions and those who experience them, and very rarely do they connect to the politics of the host organisation itself. While some such conversations attend to the dynamics of speaking and listening, and experimenting with participatory forms and formats, they more often than not replicate the single voice, single microphone approach. Questions regarding the inherent contradictions and hypocrisies of such events are routinely dismissed, if not treated with hostility, cynicism or exasperation, followed by assertions of the 'dialogical' power of the event. Such was the case when, at the very same event about 'Art and Immaterial' during which Peter Osborne made his proclamation about the political platform of the art field, very little about the material or immaterial labour of the art world was discussed.<sup>73</sup> When a group of cultural activists posed questions about the unpaid labour conditions of the event during the Q&A, the audience reacted with hostility and the organisers refused to respond.

Increasingly however, these contradictions are registered within the local contexts in which public programmes are located. This was the case when protests surrounding the public programmes of the 13<sup>th</sup> Istanbul Biennial (2013) whose theme 'Public Alchemy' was taken up as

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<sup>73</sup> David Graeber, "The Sadness of Post-Workerism or "Art and Immaterial Labour" Conference, a Sort of a Review (Tate Britain, Saturday 19 January, 2008)," [libcom.org](https://libcom.org), 2008, accessed August 15, 2016, [https://libcom.org/files/graeber\\_sadness.pdf](https://libcom.org/files/graeber_sadness.pdf).

an invitation by local activists to protest Biennial sponsors who were directly involved in the city's gentrification programme. Responding to the evictions of thousands of people, which was also the subject of major protests in Gezi Park in 2012, their action, entitled '*Public Capital*' and stage on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2013, involved a group of artists and community organisers entering into the Biennial's public programme wearing T-shirts printed with the names of forcibly gentrified neighbourhoods in Istanbul. Throughout the event, members of the group stood up from the crowd and draped themselves on the floor in the middle of the room using a piece of cloth printed with the logos of related companies. According to activists and bystanders, the performance was put to an end by the Biennial's organising team who roughly picked up protesters and carried them away from the venue. The police were called and an activist arrested for video recording the proceedings, focusing on the Biennial's curator. It was clear that the Biennial's goals to 'activate social engagement' and to host a 'public fora to generate a possibility for rethinking the concept of publicness' did not include unsolicited action in relation to the event's own conditions of production. Instead, in their terms, the aim of the Biennial and its public programme was to open up the idea of 'a real public sphere' including 'all kinds of different voices, even conflicting ideas, in which people can talk without fear and without obstructing one another.' Additionally, they stated that '...impeding such platforms only reproduces the methods that obstruct freedom of expression...' Such a notion of the platform, however, bars the presence of conflicting relationships, and suggests that art world platforms provide an otherwise empty and neutral meeting ground, obscuring the many entanglements and complicities of the arts in broader social and political relations. The framing of the platform as a neutral and an idealised public sphere also obscures the ways in which audiences and participants might also become the subject of discussions in such a public forum.

These examples begin to give us a glimpse of the slippage and contradictions between notions of public and the public sphere, and the post-democratic conditions they inhabit. While platforms may indeed be places in which to discuss and analyse the circumstances and theories of post-democracy, they are also often one of its primary symptoms.

This platform departs radically from the conception of the public sphere as 'a political space in which the many can tend to common affairs'.<sup>74</sup> This definition, offered by Paulo Virno, arguably takes the concept one step further than Habermas' definition of the public sphere as a non-

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<sup>74</sup> Virno, 'Publicness of the Intellect. Non-State Public Sphere and the Multitude.6

state entity 'made up of private people gathered together as a public and articulating the needs of society with the state'.<sup>75</sup> Virno's definition, as will be elaborated in the next chapter, is founded on the writing of Hannah Arendt. Where Habermas' definition of the public sphere largely focuses on dialogue and the formation of public opinion within the 'lifeworld', opinion that has the efficacy to produce changes in the 'system' (the State),<sup>76</sup> Arendt's notion focuses more on the 'space of appearance' offered by the public realm and its role in relation to the negotiation of 'common' of things through which people come together.<sup>77</sup>

At events such as the 'Art and Immaterial Labour' seminar at the Tate or the public programme at the Istanbul Biennial, there is neither the negotiation of 'common affairs' nor the authority to make systemic change. Beyond this, such efficacies are often actively disabled through a structural disinterest in the issues discussed. It is precisely this lack of correspondence between claims of the speech of political urgency and the spaces and actions that are permissible to act upon them within public programmes, that I will describe in this thesis as the practice of speaking and thinking *without* conditions.

Like the hollow shell suggested by Crouch, the platform perhaps moves toward operating in a way that is consistent with more recent usages of the term, platform, as the meeting of market and technology in 'platform capitalism'.<sup>78</sup> According to Srnicek, the platforms of 'platform capitalism' produce a generic 'ecosystem', a seemingly neutral and uninvested mechanism. In platform capitalism, encounters appear to be more direct and democratic, disguising wildly unequal and 'unfavourable conditions of production'.<sup>79</sup> While this thesis will not explore, in depth, the specific correspondences across these fields, it is enough to point here to further

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<sup>75</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 176.

<sup>76</sup> Jürgen Habermas, "Further Reflections on the Public Sphere," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992).

<sup>77</sup> Hannah Arendt, "The Public Realm: Common (Excerpt from The Human Condition)," in *The Idea of the Public Sphere*, eds. Hallvard Moe, Anders Molander and Graham Murdock (Lexington Books, 2010), 104-105.

<sup>78</sup> Nick Srnicek, *Platform Capitalism* (John Wiley & Sons, 2016).

<sup>79</sup> See *ibid.*, 28; and Sebastian Olma, "Never Mind the Sharing Economy: Here's Platform Capitalism," blog post, Institute of Network Cultures, October 16, 2014, <http://networkcultures.org/mycreativity/2014/10/16/never-mind-the-sharing-economy-heres-platform-capitalism/>.

complex interrelationships between the rhetoric of democracy, labour practices and the market under the name of the platform.

This chapter instead seeks to situate the 'platform' of public programming as a concrete iteration of 'speaking without conditions', as both a symptom and a mechanism through which we can explore the privileging of certain neoliberal iterations of publicity. To develop this analysis, this chapter will now go on to consider whether those who provide and enact platforms deliberately or intentionally unhinge critical words from critical actions. Is this unhinging a wilfully de-politicizing act or an act that is symptomatic of wider institutional constraints? Below, I will chart specific stories and forms of separation at play in the de-linking of spaces of public speaking and thinking from their consequences in action. I aim to lay out this field of speaking without conditions in its widest form so that we can begin to recognise the limits of platforms as a site for public programmes. In doing so, I will lay the ground for subsequent chapters that move away from this impoverished idea of the platform, to address the creation of infrastructures for *thinking with conditions*, as a crucial step for imagining ways in which we might think and manifest concrete political and social change.

### 1.1 The Platform as A Mechanism of Separation

*When you think about how natural and advantageous it is for Man to identify his language with his reality, you get an idea of what degree of sophistication he had to attain to dissociate them....*<sup>80</sup>

- Guy Debord -

I begin this section with three moments from my own archive of 'institutional monographs' collected within the field of public programming:

*Moment 1:* Curators at a small gallery invite a group of artists from another city working with a migrant rights organisation to engage in a democratic and experimental performance as part of their public programme. The artists come on the condition that people interested in migration issues from the local area will be invited. The curators 'reach out' to local communities to ensure this happens. In the post-performance discussion, common ground is

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<sup>80</sup> From the opening scene of *Critique of Separation Part I* by Guy Debord, 1961.  
- from André Martinet, *Éléments de linguistique générale* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1980).

established and there is great enthusiasm amongst the local attendees to continue collaborating to counteract a particularly acute anti-migrant sentiment in the area. When the groups look to the gallery curators for continuing support, the curators say 'but it is enough that we have had this experience together. We have provided a *platform for dialogue*.'<sup>81</sup>

*Moment 2:* A group of artists involved in developing a project about the history of anti-racism are working as part of the public programme of a biennial in a large-scale art museum. The curator who commissioned the project is asked a series of questions about the gallery's own policies on racism by the artists and their colleagues in the anti-racism movement. She writes in an email to all concerned that 'it is not the gallery's responsibility to take on the politics of the artist. It is to present a *platform for debate*.'

*Moment 3:* An art gallery well known for its innovation in the production of large discursive events receives a letter from an art and activist group that has recently spoken at a large-scale public programming 'marathon' that they hosted on the topic of 'manifestos'. In the letter, the group requests that the gallery review its policies on support from oil companies – the topic on which they spoke in their contribution to the public event. The public relations department brings the letter to the curators. In the course of the conversation, the PR officer and curators question the motives of the artist group. The PR officer asks, 'Why would we do this? We have given them a *platform to speak out* on this issue, that is our role, isn't that enough?'

Rather than producing a gateway between discussion and the 'negotiation of common affairs' of the public sphere, the platform in these examples, produces both a buffer and a rationale for refusing to engage with the politics of organisation. In these instances, the platform produces a separation similar to that of the spectacle, a separation that the turn from the museological to the discursive described at the beginning of this chapter claimed, at least in part, to undo. It might also be possible to understand the circumstances described above as Habermasian iterations of the bourgeois public sphere, as cultural sites in which men [now women, art students, etc.] of letters congregate, to stage argument and debates, critical of state authority. In these scenes, Habermas argues that aspects of life that have not previously been questioned are problematised, but this questioning serves only to naturalise the relations

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<sup>81</sup> Quoted from materials in the Author's fieldwork notes.

of elites.<sup>82</sup> Yet in the context of contemporary art institutions, the structural conditions of platforms as public spaces for dialogue are even more contradictory. Those who 'make' platforms wish at once to 'open a platform', to 'provide a space for 'dialogue', 'debate' and 'speaking out' while actively blocking the movement from thinking and speaking together in public, and moving into collective action. What drives this duplicity? And what do we do with democratic principles like the 'public sphere' assembled in a post-democratic context? The following sections address these questions, first by looking into the complex motivations of these platform providers, and second, by widening the context in which we might situate the three principles that emerged in the anecdotes provided above; those of 'dialogue', 'debate' and 'speaking out'.

## 1.2 The Platform as Lying or Pretending?

Interest in political debate and dialogue through this 'provision' of platforms by arts institutions often operates as a kind double-speak or a double-game. Arts institutions wish to show or represent 'the political' or the 'critical', while safe-guarding against political intervention, Brian Holmes uses the metaphor of the liar and the poker game in his influential essay 'Liar's Poker' written in 2000, when alter-globalisation social movements and artists politicized in that moment began to work with and have their work shown in major galleries and museums. 'Liar's Poker' works as follows:

*[...] the artist often plays as a team with the curator or the critic. As for the cards, the ace is political reality, and its image in the museum is highly attractive. This gives the artist a great advantage: because to prove an ace is a bluff, you have to go out looking, whereas the public prefers to stay inside the museum. The artist, however, also has a great disadvantage, which is that the house — I mean the people who run the game, the founders, the funders, the boards and directors — actually can't stand aces, and if they think the artist really has one, they will never let him or her set foot inside the museum.<sup>83</sup>*

This kind of double dealing and lying finds its not so hidden motivation, according to Holmes, in producing social capital, which in the arts is, at least, partially acquired through the accumulation of cultural capital. This he describes as 'the ability to produce and display the very specific types of signs, images and gestures which are most valued within a given field at a

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<sup>82</sup> Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a category of Bourgeois Society*, 27-36.

<sup>83</sup> Holmes, 'Liar's Poker. Representation of Politics/Politics of Representation.

particular period.’ In addition to an investment in these forms of capital, Holmes extends his analysis of why it is that so many engage in this kind of hypocrisy to Bourdieu’s concept of ‘interests’. An ‘interest’ (such as the interest in democratising formats, or critical thinking) for Bourdieu relates to those issues and ideas that ‘interest’ those who are either born into or become active participants in a social game or habitus. Interest could equally be described as ‘investment’ he says; the reasons why it is advantageous, according to the rules of the game as outlined, to find some things interesting or worthy and others not.

Bourdieu describes these ‘interests’ as co-existent within the artist or art world’s ‘disinterest’. That is their performance as outsiders as though they are not part of the economy of interests that drive other fields, namely those of value and the exchange of money. The obscuring of the economies of art is, for Bourdieu, found most profoundly in the language of euphemism. New terms must be invented so that economics are obscured – an art salesperson, is a ‘gallerist’,<sup>84</sup> the product is ‘the work’ – so that economic and organisational conditions become unspeakable. However, as with all fields of disinterest that lay claim to a universal value beyond economy and beyond the specific social field in which they are constituted, there are always interests deeply embedded in this disinterest, indeed things that are profitable to the disinterested (the hierarchical organisation of art, for example).<sup>85</sup> Some of these interests lie in the realm of symbolic value, like in the cultural capital described by Holmes or in the signature culture described by Bourdieu. Others are derived directly from the actual profits of the pseudo-virtuous positioning of the arts in society, through which corporations and wealthy individuals increase their own appearance of virtue by ‘art-washing’ their socially or ecologically detrimental activities. All of these are rendered unspeakable in the customary use of euphemism. Far from being indifferent or disengaged, disinterest, the lie in liar’s poker, exists as a double gesture laying claim to the real (the urgent, the critical, the political), while all the while hiding its own conditions of production. While Holmes is speaking particularly of the exhibitionary practices of galleries, the analysis can be equally applied to the discursive realm of the arts, in that they make use of the symbolic value of the topic or theme in separation from the conditions under which it is explored; generating content without consequence. Where there is a widespread critique of the marketisation of particular art works or art institutions, questions about the marketisation of political thematics and thinkers involved in public

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<sup>84</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Practical Reason: Towards a Theory of Action* (Stanford University Press, 1998), 109-112.

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*, ‘Is A Disinterested Act Possible?’ 80-84.

programmes are much less common in the art world. This results in the field of public discourse, and the figure of the platform, being far less scrutinised and seemingly more virtuous than that of exhibitionary practice.

But is this separation – between critical platforms and critical actions and between those who make claim to the space of political urgency, all the while blocking the realisation of consequences – always a lie? Is the invention, use and circulation of euphemisms, and the denial / suppression of interests at play a deliberate set of constructions and lies within the art field? And if so, what kind of lies are at work?

In his essay titled 'History of a Lie: Prolegomena', Jacques Derrida maps out a number of characteristics of the phenomenon of lying. The lie, he suggests, is the category of the *pseudo* (with falsehood, cunning, mistake, fraud and even poetic invention) and as such is 'intrinsically foreign to the problem of knowledge, truth and the true and the false'.<sup>86</sup> Drawing from the writings of Augustine, he distinguishes a lie from a fiction or an error insofar as a lie has to be intentional, to intend to deceive or cause damage. A lie is therefore defined not by what is said or by its content but by its act of intention. The lie is in the lying. The act of lying (with intent) is marked by a declarative utterance but found in the actions that precede and exceed it. And because a lie is defined by its intention, Derrida suggests that it is not possible to lie to oneself.

Departing from these definitions of the classical or 'frank' lies (what we commonly understand to be a lie), he moves to the work of Hannah Arendt. In her writings about the Eichmann trial featured in the *New Yorker* in 1967, Arendt attempts to develop a theory of the modern lie; one that is extra-moral and not reliant on Kantian propositions on the sanctity of truth (for Kant a lie is always harmful, even without harm as it puts into all truth and reason into jeopardy). Arendt marks the passing of the lie from its status as the utterance of deceit to the modern lie as follows:

*The traditional lie, so prominent in the history of diplomacy and statecraft, used to concern either true secrets – data that had never been made public – or intentions, which anyhow do not possess the same degree of reliability as accomplished facts...In contrast the modern political lies deal efficiently with things that are not secrets at all but are known to practically everybody. This is obvious in the case of rewriting*

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<sup>86</sup> Jacques Derrida, 'History of a Lie: Prolegomena' in *Without Alibi*, ed. and trans. Peggy Kamuf (Stanford, 2002). 32 Earlier versions of this text appeared in *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal*, IX,2 and XX, 1 and *Futures of Jacques Derrida*, ed., Richard Rand (Stanford, 2001)

*contemporary history under the eyes of those who witnessed it, but it is equally true in image-making of all sorts...for an image, unlike an old-fashioned portrait, is supposed not to flatter reality but to offer a full fledged substitute for it. And this substitute, because of modern techniques and the mass media, is of course much more in the public eye than the original ever was.*<sup>87</sup>

It is not through the media *per se* but through a precedence of a 'mediatic structure' and mediated processes of subjectivation, as I will discuss in greater depth in the next chapter, that the lie has transformed 'the status of the image and of public space'.<sup>88</sup> In a footnote, Derrida describes Arendt's 'image' as a 'mutation that effects the substitutive status of the substitute' insofar as the mediatic apparatus renders the representative-substitute of the thing as the 'thing itself' without ever producing even a demand for the referent upon which it was based.<sup>89</sup>

According to Derrida, the word and the concept of the lie meet their limit when it becomes clear that the implications of lying are more serious than the act of the lie itself can contain. Derrida says that in the 'absence of any transcendent referent, or even any meta-interpretive norm, there is no way of measuring the lie, or its damage, making it fundamentally irreparable.'<sup>90</sup> The platform can be read in this light as beyond the strict sense of the lie. It is not that its contents are erroneous or that people who organise or present within it do not 'speak the truth', but rather that their intentions no longer exist in relation to their social and political referents. In most instances, it is simply the case that their referents, their impetus and context for engaging with particular thematics is markedly absent. In the face of the lie that has lost its referent and without a clear intent to lie, and returning to Bourdieu's concept of the *pseudo*, might we more aptly describe what happens in the context of speaking without conditions as a form of *pretending*?

### **1.3 Platforms for Pretending**

In the 1958 'Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society', two philosophers of words came together around the question: what is the relation between what we say and what we do when we are

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<sup>87</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Truth in Politics* (1967), 252.

<sup>88</sup> *ibid*, 253

<sup>89</sup> Derrida *ibid* 293

<sup>90</sup> *ibid*.

pretending? The year was late in the career of J.L. Austin, renowned for his text *How to Do Things with Words* (1955/62)<sup>91</sup> and early in that of Gertrude Elizabeth Margaret (G.E.M.) Anscombe, former student and translator of Wittgenstein, who had just published her major work *Intention* (1957).<sup>92</sup> In their debate, they addressed the question of whether it is possible to *pretend* to be angry.

Departing from anger or 'emotional' pretending, the authors worked through a number of examples to reach more general conclusions about what it means to pretend. Austin, for example, suggests that pretending must have a public dimension. It is, by nature, performed for another. He also suggests that while it is commonplace to understand the limit of pretending to be the 'crossing over into the real', the terms pretend/real present a false binary. He uses the example of a person at a party who – as part of a game - is asked to pretend to be a hyena. The man 'crosses over' when, while down on all fours, he bites the leg of his host. The guests, shocked, are most certainly no longer in the realm of fantasy. Their reaction is not, however, because he has broken the code of pretending by acting like a hyena, but, says Austin, because he has crossed the border of social permissibility.<sup>93</sup> It is possible, he points out, to *pretend* while at the same time really engaging in the behaviour one is 'pretending' to enact without eliciting this kind of reaction. To prove this he uses another example, that of a window cleaner who is pretending to clean windows but is seen actually cleaning them. Later the cleaner says that he is only doing so to spy inside. Here the pretender is *actually performing* the act he is pretending to do, but for another reason. It is that other reason that constitutes the pretending. Austin says, 'The essence of the situation in pretending is... that my public behaviour is meant to *disguise* some reality, some other behaviour'.<sup>94</sup>

Crucially, pretending is, therefore, about concealing another reality, not (or not only) about engaging in behaviour that is untrue. It involves intent but not the intent to lie or the intent to conceal another fact. It is still pretending to engage in the real so long as while one is

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<sup>91</sup> J.L Austin, *How to Do Things with Words: The William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955*, eds. J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962).

<sup>92</sup> Gertrude Elizabeth Margaret Anscombe, *Intention* (Harvard University Press, 1957).

<sup>93</sup> G.E.M Anscombe and J.L. Austin, 'Pretending,' in *The Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume*, vol. 32, issue 1 (1958): 261-294.

<sup>94</sup> *ibid.*

pretending one does so with 'another motive'.<sup>95</sup> It is this disguising of 'another motive' that also distinguishes pretending from simply acting, in which the performance is acknowledged as such, or lying, which Anscombe, like Derrida, describes as 'a speech act that contradicts what the speaker un-reflexively thinks.' One can, Anscombe points out, *pretend* without saying something that is untrue.

Here the question of intent is not a question of the introduction of an individualised moralising paradigm but a return to Derrida's description of un-moored 'social and political referents'.<sup>96</sup> The ritualisation of this un-mooring suggests a number of questions. Why, for example, do the providers of platforms not seek out the genealogies and practices that might support them to link action with the urgent issues they declare? Why are the identification of such inconsistencies often relegated to silence? One can return here to Habermas' notion of the interest in disinterest that is characterised by the bourgeois conception of culture; a 'disinterest' that masks the preservation of interests - the interests of class, of cultural capital, of careers and the life of the individual over the common. In what follows, this question of intent will be embedded in discussions concerning the 'public pedagogy' of public programming; the implicit mechanisms that produce this unmooring of referents and diversion of desires.

Anscombe ascribes the term 'hypocritical pretending'<sup>97</sup> to that form of pretending in which what is hidden and the reason for hiding it are held in high esteem, for example, when the reason for pretending is related to principle. The trajectory from *lying* to *pretending* gives us access to something beyond the dichotomy of lying/telling the truth to the very particular form of separation we find in post-Fordist iterations of the platform. Where lying is embodied by the declarative utterance, *pretending* combines speech and action in a complicated series of performances of hiding, disguise and crucially, most often in the name of a higher principle.

Boltanski and Thévenot call this intricate performative landscape as 'the regime of justification'. Examining these regimes, they suggest, moves the object of sociological inquiry from the question of the social actor and the social structure, and towards 'the different situations that

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<sup>95</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> Derrida, 'History of the Lie: Prolegomena,' 64.

<sup>97</sup> Anscombe and Austin, 'Pretending.'

call upon different regimes of action.<sup>98</sup> Of most importance for them is the 'regime of justification', that is, a regime of action wherein there is some disagreement and where actions need to be justified. Here the pretense of the platforms carried out in the name of the higher principle of the public sphere might be thought of as a regime of justification for the degree of hypocritical pretending that takes place.

In the realm of public programming, in which thinking without conditions is prevalent, the platform then allows for the hiding of something through the language of something else that is held in 'high esteem' and becomes the mechanism through which to mask particular interests. It allows for the maintenance of cultural institutions within the bourgeois spheres and corporate worlds from which they draw funds and by which they are ultimately governed, and the signature culture attributed to particular artists and curators, while at the same time positing this higher, esteemed democratic principle. It is in the name of the 'platform' and its delivery of this principle held in 'high esteem' that the realm of pretending is authorised, encouraged and excused.

But what is at the heart of this emerging notion of the platform? What is at stake in this principle of 'high esteem'? Returning to the three moments with which I began this chapter, one can find three particular attributes of the platform of public programming: 'dialogue', 'debate' and 'speaking out'. These attributes serve as its pillars; the principles behind the principle. It is only by decoding how these particular attributes support the relation of separation generated by the platform that one can begin to open up other possibilities for imagining other, efficacious and connected forms of politics and struggle.

#### **1.4 Platforms for Dialogue, from Documenta to the Mock Trial of the Street**

Thus far, I have critiqued the operation of the 'platform' in the arts, as it is posited as a replacement for a disappearing public sphere, at a moment when such democratic forms are, as Streeck suggests, becoming incompatible with neo-liberal capitalism. I have also proposed that the platform operates as a mechanism for buffering this fundamental contradiction through the operation of pretending (or hypocritical pretending), perpetuated in the name of principles held in higher esteem, including dialogue, debate and speaking out. In the following

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<sup>98</sup> Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot, 'The Sociology of Critical Capacity,' *European Journal of Social Theory* 2, no. 3 (1999): 359-377.

sections I will explore these three main principles, tracing them as wider tendencies that shed light on their use within the platforms of public programming.

Returning to the platforms of Documenta 11, the staging of dialogue was fundamental to Okwei Enwezor's proposition of 'art as knowledge production'. He imagined platforms to be 'constellations of discursive domains,' in which people could at once ponder the 'complex predicaments of contemporary art in a time of profound historical change' and to challenge the 'optics and visual logic of contemporary art,' inverting 'the logic that the exhibition's centrality is what defines the proper meaning of the artistic and intellectual possibilities of its procedures.'<sup>99</sup> These dialogues aimed to 'question the efficacy of the institutionalised discourses' and to produce 'nodes of discursivity and debate ... as forums of committed ethical and intellectual reflection on the possibilities of rethinking the historical procedures that are part of its contradictory heritage of grand conclusions'.<sup>100</sup> Dialogue in the form of the platform was to pose a counter-position to the hegemony of exhibitionary culture as an instantiation of European colonialism. Instead, platforms would engage in the production of a 'democratic spirit' whose 'referent' was constituted by the degree to which institutions could 'make room within their regimes for the experimental, the imperfect and unfinished'.<sup>101</sup>

At the time, these curatorial statements produced heated debates in the art field about the 'death' of the curator, and the abandonment of aesthetics in favour of the 'journalistic', the documentary, text, politics and theory. In curatorial statements around the platforms however, dialogue was specifically figured as experimental and as a counter position to authority, aesthetics, taste, authorship, hegemony and so on. These debates between aesthetics and the journalistic, and connoisseurship and experimentation, produced a blind spot as to the way in which 'dialogue' was being re-worked both within and outside of the art field.<sup>102</sup>

Within the context of art at the time, Grant Kester, for example, spoke of the emergence of a 'dialogic aesthetics' in 2000, which was later manifested in his book *Conversation Pieces* (2004). In the 2002 translation into English of *Relational Aesthetics*, Nicholas Bourriaud

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<sup>99</sup> Enwezor, 'The Black Box,' 54.

<sup>100</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> *ibid.*, 53.

<sup>102</sup> Konstantinos Stafylakis, 'A Black Box on Ground Zero. Does Enwezor's Ground Zero Signal the End of Curatorial Authority?' in *Feedback 01* (London: Whitechapel, 2004), 18-22.

declared the artist as a 'semionaut' at the turn from 'the aura of artworks to publics'.<sup>103</sup> For Kester, the 'dialogic aesthetic' emerged from the intersection of avant-garde performance movements such as Fluxus, on the one hand, and the community arts movement of the 1970s and 80s on the other. These practices sought to align art and artists with struggles around race, class and gender but also to question hegemonic formats of art production, moving their practices into the realm of everyday life and embedding their work within sites of social conflict. As Kester suggests, 'in these projects conversation becomes an integral part of the work itself.' As such, dialogue is re-framed as an 'active, generative process that can help us speak and imagine beyond the limits of fixed identities and official discourse'.<sup>104</sup> Where Enwezor's concern was with the grand narratives of European hegemony embodied in the historical trajectory of Documenta and other such international exhibitions, Kester was concerned with the anti-discursive tendency of both the modern *avant-garde* and post-modern writers like Francois Lyotard. Lyotard, he suggests, positions communication as 'inherently oppressive' due to its attachment to mass media, and favours instead 'unrepresentable opacity'.<sup>105</sup> For Bourriaud, the turn to dialogue as a subset of the 'relational' in artistic practice of this period, represents a paradigm shift in the arts. For him, it is related to communicative experimentation brought about through interaction on the Internet and before it, by linguistic experimentation found in the practices of, for example, Umberto Eco who, in *Open Work*, posits the understanding of the artwork's reception as a site of performance.<sup>106</sup> Taken to further and arguably wilder conclusions, curators like Hans Ulrich Obrist, suggested that such platforms for dialogue such as the 24-hour marathons produced at the Serpentine Galleries could enact an 'infinite conversation' that could perform openness without end propelled by the ethos, 'don't stop', also the title of one of Obrist's many books.<sup>107</sup>

In these cases, the allocation of dialogue, which had historically been relegated to 'unglamorous' learning or adult education departments in galleries,<sup>108</sup> to the equivalent status of exhibition display seemed like a force of democratisation in the art world, disrupting as

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<sup>103</sup> Nicholas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (2002).

<sup>104</sup> Kester, *Conversation Pieces, Community and Communication in Modern Art*, 9.

<sup>105</sup> Kester, 'Dialogical Aesthetics: A Critical Framework For Littoral Art.9

<sup>106</sup> Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*.

<sup>107</sup> Hans Ulrich Obrist, *dontstopdontstopdontstopdontstop* (Postmedia Books, 2010).

<sup>108</sup> Sternfeld, 'Unglamorous Tasks: What Can Education Learn from its Political Traditions?'

stated earlier, the hegemony of the visual and spectacular (and increasingly market-driven) global exhibition culture in favour of a discursive scene where viewers might become more active agents. However, as Hal Foster suggests, such a 'dialogic' turn also happened at a time in which fundamental shifts were taking place in Western economies towards new forms of 'cognitive labour', a point seldom addressed by curators narrating the dialogic turn.<sup>109</sup> As noted earlier, this takes place under the broader rubric of the knowledge economy, and what Paolo Virno argues is that the collapse of the public sphere into the realm of labour begins with the development of post-Fordism in the late 1970s and 80s. It cannot be ignored therefore, that the dialogic turn in art happens when there is an equivalent turn in labour toward modes of production described by Franco Berardi and others as 'semio-capital'. As Berardi suggests:

*Semio-capital is in a crisis of overproduction, but the form of this crisis is not only economic but also psychopathic. Semio-capital, in fact, is not about the production of material goods, but about the production of psychic stimulation. The mental environment is saturated by signs that create a sort of continuous excitation, a permanent electrocution, which leads the individual mind as well as the collective mind to a state of collapse.*<sup>110</sup>

Berardi's use of 'collapse' to refer to forms of physical exhaustion fostered by such over-production, builds on Virno's description of the collapse of a set of historical distinctions through which particular activities of thought and language production were designated as 'public'. This new figuration of public will be explored in greater depth in the next chapter.

The full ramifications of the platform in public programming, its interests in dialogue and democracy and cultivation of non-action, can be read beyond the field of art and into other spaces, including those of law, education and political theory, amongst others. What follows is an excursive reading of the use of the platform in other sectors to shed light on its mechanisms of pretending beyond the sphere of contemporary art.

Narrating a set of concerns that are not dissimilar to the context of the platform in Documenta 11, the legal and communications scholar Cornelia Vismann describes an early debate about the 'democratisation' of the law in the televising of court trials in the 1950s. On one side of this debate she suggests, there was a position for the televising of trials, described as an 'emancipatory' or 'democratic' gesture insofar as the judge, the ultimate oedipal figure of

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<sup>109</sup> Hal Foster, 'Exhibitionists,' *London Review of Books*, Vol. 37, No. 11 (June 2015): 13-14.

<sup>110</sup> Franco Berardi, *Prekarious Rhapsody* (London: Minor Compositions, 2009).

authority (equivalent to the curator in the arts), would be dethroned, replaced by the dialogic opinion of viewers in a 'public sphere'. The theatricality of television, said advocates, would enable 'a possibility for negating the compulsion and violence of the law'. In this they meant that televising would displace the authority of the judge, allowing the public a platform in which to process, form opinions, dialogue and debate the 'outsider knowledge' of violence. Where such outsider violence historically has entered through evidence and speech acts, at the procedural hands of the judge, here television would create a democratised platform by which to generate public opinion. Without the sole voice of the judge sat up high upon his chair, gavel in hand, this 'outsider knowledge' would enter into public knowledge through dialogue and be at the hands of the many. While the judge may have ruling power, the televised court of public opinion would proliferate voices and verdicts.

For advocates of the opposing position, and here Vismann refers to the work of psychoanalyst Pierre LeGendre in particular, the ritual, including the physical presence of the courtroom is significant in the process of making 'outsider knowledge' public. The act of presenting testimony, of speaking violence to a live audience at the sole hands of the presiding judge, is an indispensable clinical act, says Vismann of LeGendre; 'a cure for men,' as the court presents opportunity for an encounter of the Real within the Symbolic order.<sup>111</sup> It allows for a ritual 'coming to terms' with the outsider knowledge of violence. Proponents of television disagree, arguing that this understanding of the court is preservationist in function and sees the passage to public knowledge as nothing but the upholding of particular conducts: *auditory conducts* – control over who is speaking and who is listening - and *procedural conducts* - the formal processes followed by the court's two main protagonists, the prosecutor and the accused.

As much as Vismann argues for a move away from these preservationist tendencies, in her account of the debate she is equally concerned about making the courtroom public, a process that she describes as the 'tribunalisation' of the court. She argues from the perspective of the present, that while a judge replaced by the camera opens up the space of the court, the ritual of the legal search for justice will give way to the logic of the duel, to a performance in which television becomes the mediator, the convener of things, and the values of entertainment and salability supersede. She is clearly satisfied with neither.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> *ibid.*, 119.

<sup>112</sup> *ibid.*, 130.

With hindsight, we now only have to go so far as to flip through the litany of shows on North American television that run the gamut from Judge Judy to Geraldo Rivera, to understand the degree to which this 'duelisation' has taken place. While one might have argued that the opening up the court was a gesture of public education, inviting the live studio audience to shout out their judgments and allowing them access to this outsider knowledge in order that they may have dialogue about the judgment of the other, what is more often learned in these publicised debates is how to form opinions and rulings upon those with and to whom we have no relation. The word 'justice' becomes a distorted mirror for a world with no actual stakes, implications or conditions. The ritual and careful coding of the 'outsider' knowledge of violence is barely present as the dualistic argument-form moves on auto-pilot, reinforcing common knowledge and moralistic opinions, not only in the viewing scenario but into everyday life.

In June 2011, I made an audio recording with members of the sound art collective 'Ultra-red' in Mexico City. The recording is of a police officer enlisting members of the public in the *ad hoc* trial of a young woman who stole a purse in a busy urban square. The young woman had to get into the police car and was supported by her friend, both of whom then engaged in a verbal questioning of the police. They were not, as would be customary in many places, silenced by force, but rather engaged in a heated debate with the officers. As time passed and the women became more and more vocal in their argumentation, passers-by in the square stopped and became involved, taking sides for and against. They were facilitated by the police officers in a kind of mock trial of the street, in which the officers played the role of prosecutor and mediator.

Myself and Leonardo, a member of the collective and a housing activist from Los Angeles, looked on in amazement. How could such a public dialogue be permitted, even *facilitated* by the police? Was this a re-emergence of the disappeared public sphere? How could even the suggestion of why her actions did or did not necessitate a trip to the police station, be entertained by those whose very authority derives from their ability to make such decisions? All opinions – even counter positions – seemed welcome in this *ad hoc* court of the street. After a clear pattern of adversarial speech emerged, with each side being given ample space for articulating their position, the police refuted those who felt the woman should be set free and supported those who felt she should be taken away, turning the dialogue to their favour. In the end, the young woman was placed in the car without a fight and her friend and supporter, having been 'convinced' by the proceedings, conceded that this was the best course of action.

In an interview with us afterwards, the police officer recounted how he had successfully persuaded the people on the street. He described this performative argumentation as the 'provision of a platform' and part of the training of officers in a strategy designed to ensure that people feel 'as though' they are involved in a dialogue. He lamented this, wishing that they could adopt techniques of pure force, in which such a ritual would not have to occur. When we asked if this dialogue could influence the outcome, he looked at us with surprise: 'No, of course not. She did it'.<sup>113</sup>

### 1.5 The Platform as Public Pedagogy of Separation

This passage from the democratisation of the court to the court of the street through the provision of *platforms for dialogue* suggests that today, dialogue cannot be seen as something that exists outside of relations of either labour or, as we have seen, force. Posed against the notion of spectacle in the case of Enwezor or convention in the case of the court, what these moments illustrate is that the platform is less a site of *democratisation* and rather, what I call here, a performative and public pedagogy of *separation*: separation between a claimed interest in democratisation and its actualisation in the re-distribution of power; a separation between thematics and their consequences in policy; and, finally, a profound separation between critical discourse and critical action.

In Guy Debord's writing on the spectacle, he predicts such a passage. In point four of *Society of the Spectacle*, Guy Debord tells us that 'The spectacle is not a collection of images, but a social relation among people, mediated by images'<sup>114</sup> and that this relation is one of 'generalized separation.'<sup>115</sup>

*The spectacle presents itself simultaneously as all of society, as part of society, and as instrument of unification. As a part of society it is specifically the sector which concentrates all gazing and all consciousness. Due to the very fact that this sector is separate, it is the common ground of the deceived gaze and of false consciousness, and the unification it achieves is nothing but an official language of generalized separation.*<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Ultra-red, *Unpublished Field Recordings*, Mexico, June, 2012.

<sup>114</sup> Point four from Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (1967).

<sup>115</sup> *ibid.*, point four

<sup>116</sup> *ibid.*

As spectacle is further unhinged from its status as sector and from the circulation of commodified images that was its base, it becomes generalised through what Henry Giroux describes as a 'public pedagogy'.<sup>117</sup> Though Giroux and others often use this term to analyse 'how media, culture and society function as educative forces',<sup>118</sup> Giroux also suggests that public pedagogy operates as a 'performative practice' that is embodied in the lived interactions between 'people, texts, and institutions'.<sup>119</sup>

This notion of public pedagogy supports an analysis of the platform as an agent that imports and naturalises the 'language of generalized separation' across various fields. The spectacle no longer needs to appear before us on a screen or a stage, or in an exhibition to enact itself as separation, but rather manifests itself as separation itself – separation of thought and of politics from meaningful spheres of reference. That is to say, while you can take people out of the spectacle you cannot take the spectacle – one of the key performative frames within the contest of neoliberalism – out of people and their relations. It is in this state of generalised separation that platforms for dialogue become de-linked from their agencies and an emancipated vision for speech acts made in public becomes 'hollowed out'. More importantly however, platforms become active pedagogical agents of teaching and naturalising such a separation. As in the case of the court of the street in Mexico, everyone has an interest in the performance around the decision but no relation to what is being decided upon.

I am not arguing that we should give up on dialogue or deem it useless or co-opted, as we will see in the coming chapters, but rather suggest that dialogue as a positive value is not a given; it cannot be appealed to simply as a 'higher principle'. Dialogue cannot be simply claimed as an indication of democracy or as an emblem of the 'public sphere'. Platforms for dialogue, in my analysis, can be seen as much wider phenomena used strategically and intentionally to assuage conflict and ensure the smooth operations and everyday management of the logic of 'separation', a logic required for the governance of neoliberal capitalism. Pedagogy, introduced here by Giroux, is the way in which something (spectacle) becomes generalisable,

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<sup>117</sup> Giroux, 'Cultural Studies, Public Pedagogy and the Responsibility of Intellectuals.'

<sup>118</sup> Gert Biesta, 'Becoming Public: Public Pedagogy, Citizenship And The Public Sphere,' *Social & Cultural Geography*, Vol. 13, Issue 7 (2012): 683-697.

<sup>119</sup> Giroux, 'Cultural Studies, Public Pedagogy and the Responsibility of Intellectuals.'

embedded in relationships and indeed public, which is the process through which this something is taught and naturalized.

### 1.6 Platforms for Debate or 'Separating the People from the Problem'

The 'separation' that is at the heart of neoliberal discursive and dialogic platforms, that was encountered in the last section, is more overtly stated in the realm of another higher principle called upon by public programmers at the beginning of this chapter: 'public debate'. Books, such as the best-seller *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*, published in 1981 by Roger Fisher and William L. Ury and with multiple imprints since, argues that political speech, negotiation and debate, should be dissociated from their referents. The first principle of *Getting to Yes* is 'separate the people from the problem'.<sup>120</sup>

Where debate is often associated and valorised as a key characteristic of the public sphere and its relationship to democracy, 'civil society' and 'citizenship' in the neoliberal landscape, it is recast as a practice in which such separations are taught and instilled. As part of New Labour's curriculum reform introduced in the United Kingdom in 2002 for example, renewed forms of citizenship education were introduced and in many cases, took the form of duelistic mock debates. The stakes of these debates are allocated to pupils from a central database of 'issues'. Pupils are given an article (often derived from the BBC archive described as 'neutral') that presents arguments for and against an issue. The pupils are then asked to arbitrarily (by choice or assignment) take one of two sides related to the issue and present an argument for or against. It is suggested to pupils that they practice the form of the argument and that they present the information on either side as 'unbiased'.<sup>121</sup>

Looking deeper one finds a general increase in the proliferation of the mock debate curricula since the 1980s. In the reconstruction and neo-liberalisation programmes of the former Yugoslavia, for example, a key element introduced under the aegis of 'civil society education' was the George Soros Youth Initiative, a global organisation of young debaters. The Soros

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<sup>120</sup> Roger Fisher and William L. Ury, *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*, (1981).

<sup>121</sup> The discussion of bias can be found in curriculum materials on the BBC website: BBC, 'Bias,' [http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/newsid\\_1660000/newsid\\_1666900/1666956.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/newsid_1660000/newsid_1666900/1666956.stm) ; and debating here: BBC, 'Debating,'ebating,ting here: BBC, n [http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/newsid\\_4530000/newsid\\_4537100/4537177.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/newsid_4530000/newsid_4537100/4537177.stm).

Fund uses two debating techniques: one, the 'Karl Popper' technique,<sup>122</sup> the other, the 'parliamentary model', in order for students to simulate the ways in which adversarial political speech should occur in a free market democracy. In other parts of the world, the Soros organisation has supported debate as a means for people to learn English, alongside the merits of adversarial and competitive speech. In this and other spaces of debate, the debate structure is used to denote Western 'liberal' values while at the same time maintaining its sense of militarism. The organisation IDEA in Indonesia, for example, suggests that students establish their capacities in English by engaging 'debate as a war', the weapons of which 'are words'.<sup>123</sup>



Figure 1.3. 'Debate is a war, but its weapons are words'  
Official t-shirt/motto of the Surabaya IDEA in Indonesia branch, Indonesia.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> This 'Karl Popper technique', according to the International Debate Education Association website, i.e. the coordinating body of debate efforts of The Open Society Institute (website), <http://www.soros.org/>, focuses on 'relevant and often deeply divisive propositions'. This is also the case with the parliamentary model, however, this engages multiple groups in the process. The IDEA website also hosts a 'debate topic database' for generating topics for debate: International Debate Education Association (website), accessed August 30, 2017, <https://debate.org/debatabase>.

<sup>123</sup> Smadabaya Debate Club, *Smada Idea* (blog), accessed August 30, 2017, <http://smadabayaenglishdebatingclub.blogspot.co.uk>.

<sup>124</sup> *ibid.*

These international programmes have been modelled in the United States where Soros has, for many years, been the core funder of the Urban Debate Leagues, a widespread network of debating teams and promoters of, amongst other things, debate across the curriculum.<sup>125</sup> Debate is suggested as a way to alleviate low achievement in schools, to promote awareness and research skills and entry points into discussion of current events. This statement from the National Association for Urban Debates (NAUD) Leagues makes it clear how political speech is intentionally used to couch the skills of a 'civil society' within the framework of education for competitive capitalist production:

*The economy of the United States depends to an ever-greater extent on the productivity and preparedness of all of our workforce, and on the value our workforce can add to an increasingly global economy. The only way to guarantee that our children maintain a high standard of living is if we attract global capital through our productivity and innovation. To protect and secure our way of life, we must provide all of our youth with a world-class education. Urban Debate Leagues take us a solid step closer to that goal ...*

-Robert Reich, former Secretary of Labor and a Professor of Social and Economic Policy at Brandeis University.<sup>126</sup>

Throughout the curriculum of the NAUD, the importance of role-playing, the arbitrariness of the political positions one might take,<sup>127</sup> and the idea of simulation is foregrounded. As in the case of the UK curriculum, topics are generated by the teacher or taken from a central database of debate topics from the Soros-funded IDEA website. A random list from the 'debatepedia' database replicates media headlines and gives debaters 'for' and 'against' topics including:

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<sup>125</sup> See Atlanta Urban Debate League, *Debate Across the Curriculum* <http://www.atlantadebate.org/debate-across-the-curriculum-2/> also the book by A Snider, M Schnurer, 'Many Sides: Debate Across the Curriculum' (The International **D**ebate Education Association - IDEA,2000).

<sup>126</sup> Kelly Phipps, Eric Tucker and Will Tucker, *Teaching Argumentation & Debate: An Educator's Activities Manual* (National Association of Urban Debate Leagues, 2012), accessed September 15, 2017, <http://www.atlantadebate.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/NAUDL-Activities-Manual.pdf>.

<sup>127</sup> From the website of the Smadabaya Debate club in Indonesia: Smadabaya Debate Club, 'Welcome to Smada Idea,' *Smada Idea* (blog), <http://smadabayaenglishdebatingclub.blogspot.com/2011/06/welcome-to-smada-idea.html>.

- Does Obama deserve a second term? oe10 October 2011.
- UN recognition of Palestinian statehood N 26 September 2011.
- American Jobs Act me17 September 2011.
- Keystone XL US-Canada oil pipeline ey5 September 2011.
- Teacher-student friendships on Facebook ea2 September 2011.
- Law school aw29 August 2011.
- Balanced budget amendment al9 August 2011.
- US debt ceiling deal S 5 August 2011.
- Obama executive order to raise the debt ceiling ba1 August 2011.
- Pornography or27 July 2011.
- Legality of coca production and consumption eg20 July 2011.
- Ban on sale of violent video games to minors an8 July 2011.
- Mandatory ultrasounds before abortions a 30 June 2011.
- US intervention in Libya S 19 June 2011.
- Should colleges ban fraternities? h 15 June 2011.
- Random sobriety tests for drivers a 7 June 2011.
- Home plate collision rule in baseball o 1 June 2011.
- Child beauty pageants hi28 May 2011.
- Trans fat ban ra19 May 2011.
- China "one child" policy h 12 May 2011.
- Release of Osama bin Laden death photos el6 May 2011
- Osama Bin Laden Sea Burial sa3 May 2011
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<sup>128</sup> 'Debatepedia' (website), International Debate Education Association, [http://debatepedia.idebate.org/en/index.php/Welcome\\_to\\_Debatepedia%21](http://debatepedia.idebate.org/en/index.php/Welcome_to_Debatepedia%21).

Excerpts of the curriculum clearly articulate the mode and stakes in precisely speaking without conditions. From the section titled *Role Play*, students are instructed to: 'Pass out a description of the scenario and read it aloud to the class. Then, hand out the role descriptions randomly to the students.'<sup>129</sup> The curriculum adds that statements, arbitrary in nature, should appear within the dualisms of argumentation, simply marking out affirmative and negative positions, adopting the logic of 'the duel':

*The first student at the front of the class should make a simple, controversial statement (e.g. "Ice cream is healthy"). The students in the class should write this statement in the first column of their paper.*

*The second student should come up with 3 or 4 arguments against the proposal and deliver them with clear distinction between the arguments ("My first argument is..., My second argument is..., My third argument is....") The students in the class should write each of these points, in order, one beneath the other, in the second column of their paper....<sup>130</sup>*

It is not only those who present the arguments but also the act of judgment that should be divested from a connection to what had been said:

#### *1.6 Think Like a Judge*

*This activity introduces the skill of judge adaptation. Students are asked to view debate from the perspective of a judge. The goal is for students to think about debate as an interaction with the audience. Students should also think about how "winning" and "losing" a debate is arbitrary and subject to the thinking of a judge: you must not simply be right, but persuade another that you are right.<sup>131</sup>*

It is also clear through this curriculum, that students achieve verbal and performative acuity that will be necessary for them to function within the 'emerging framework of productivity and innovation adopting the militarised language of the 'drill'. In order to prepare students for these activities, they are encouraged to state, practice and repeat before and during the process:

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<sup>129</sup> Phipps, Tucker and Tucker, *Teaching Argumentation & Debate: An Educator's Activities Manual*, 16.

<sup>130</sup> *ibid.*, 18.

<sup>131</sup> *ibid.*, 21.

### 3.5 Articulation Drills

*This activity develops clear and fluent articulation skills. These drills give students a chance to practice clear, confident enunciation of words. Articulation drills are a good opening warm-up for your class or after-school practice and should be repeated frequently.*<sup>132</sup>



Figure 1.5 Students from Oakhaven High School, of the Memphis Urban Debate League .<sup>133</sup>

While offering some degree of training in research and the expanded knowledge of issues, the predominant pedagogy of such a curriculum is to encourage a set of formal speaking procedures that separate the subject or content of speech from its forms. The curriculum produces a series of auditory conducts for speaking and listening, and a series of procedures through which words enter into arbitrary relations with their speaker. These conducts and procedures become part of a deeper process of subjectivation, where speakers are taught to be disinterested in issues, and at a distance from any of the concrete realities, histories or lives they invoke. Subjects do not reflect on their worlds or their experiences, as arguments presented in the curriculum are merely picked from the shelf readymade in the form of simplified binaries of mass media positions. The central guarantee of debate is that the positions and those speaking them are inter-changeable. This central guarantee occurs in the name of what is posted as a banner ad on the IDEA website, that is 'Securing Liberty'.

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<sup>132</sup> *ibid.*, 39.

<sup>133</sup> Image was taken by Mike Maple and coincided with the article on The Commercial Appeal, 'Study: Students On Debate Teams Improve Academically,' accessed October 15, 2013, <http://www.commercialappeal.com/news/2009/nov/03/debates-strong-case/> (article removed).

We see more clearly how the platform for debate teaches and entrenches the 'language of generalised separation'. In this analysis, I am not questioning the value of argumentation, research or taking positions. Nor do I seek to criticise experiments in teaching methods at a moment when schools are more fixated on chronic testing and militarisation. Indeed, many proponents of 'critical pedagogy' in the US are also supporters of debate clubs for their ability to open up spaces that break up the relentless focus on the measuring and policing of students. However, when dialogue and debate are posed against such hegemonic disciplinary and hierarchical practices, their own complicities with deeper processes of subjectivation remain unexamined. Why, in the so-called practice of 'securing liberty' – an oxymoron that already indicates the answer to the question – are debates not situated in relation to the lives of the students and workers who are its performers? Henry Giroux suggests that:

Teaching students how to argue, draw on their own experiences, or engage in rigorous dialogue says nothing about why they should engage in these actions in the first place. How the culture of argumentation and questioning relates to giving students the tools they need to fight oppressive forms of power, make the world a more meaningful and just place, and develop a sense of social responsibility is missing in contemporary, progressive frameworks of education.<sup>134</sup>

The elision of social responsibility in these forms of debate, and the avoidance of the question of why, presents a particularly deep contradiction when the same debate programmes target the schools and youth clubs of the urban poor. In these contexts, issues that face the students and others in their communities are usually absent. Furthermore, there is rarely an opportunity for students to debate with the people who make decisions about their lives and schooling. Speaking politically is instead given the status of an endless rehearsal for a politics that is to come, rather than a set of plausible actions in the present.

This sense of the rehearsal for a politics that never comes, could equally be posed to the proliferating platforms of the contemporary art field whose own repetitive formats and conducts of staged dialogue and debate normalise the blockage of plausible action. The consequences of this are increasingly grave, in the ungrounded opinions, pundit cultures and wild signifiers that find homes within the formal mechanisms and the promise that platforms for dialogue and debate offer.

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<sup>134</sup> Giroux, 'Cultural Studies in Dark Times: Public Pedagogy and the Challenge of Neoliberalism.'

## 1.7 Platforms for Speaking Out

As we have seen, the drive behind the platform in public programming emerges from a sense of its important role in supporting and promoting democracy, the public sphere and civil society. Our third kind of platform, 'platforms for speaking out', conjures a picture of the speaking subject at the height of their agency within this context. The practice of 'speaking out' mobilises the sense of urgency that is cultivated beneath the frenzy of political discussions and that proposes the platform as the site of emancipatory speech acts. This claim is not only the case within the fields of public programming or the wider spectrum of public pedagogy that have so far been examined, but it can also be read amongst theorists who narrate the emancipatory role of political speech in political life.

Take for example human rights theorist Thomas Keenan's 2006 compelling description and analysis of the interventions made by the 'Aids Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP)' New York, Montreal's 'Réaction Sida' (MS) and Toronto's 'AIDS ACTION NOW' (AAN) at the 1989 International AIDS Conference. Keenan describes the occasion when 300 members of ACT UP, MS and AAN attended the conference, the first time people with AIDS had done so since the conference's inception. Amongst them was an AAN spokesperson, Tim McCaskell. Beginning with a rally outside of the conference venue doors, and through a series of unplanned events, the activists took over the stage that was primed for a speech by then Conservative Prime Minister Brian Mulroney. In the chaos, McCaskell was handed the microphone. He made a speech, beginning 'On behalf of persons living with AIDS in Canada and around the world, I would like to officially open the Fifth International Conference on AIDS...'<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Drawn from Tim McCaskell, "Taking Our Place," *The Positive Side*, Summer 2011, <http://www.catie.ca/en/positiveside/summer-2011/taking-our-place>.

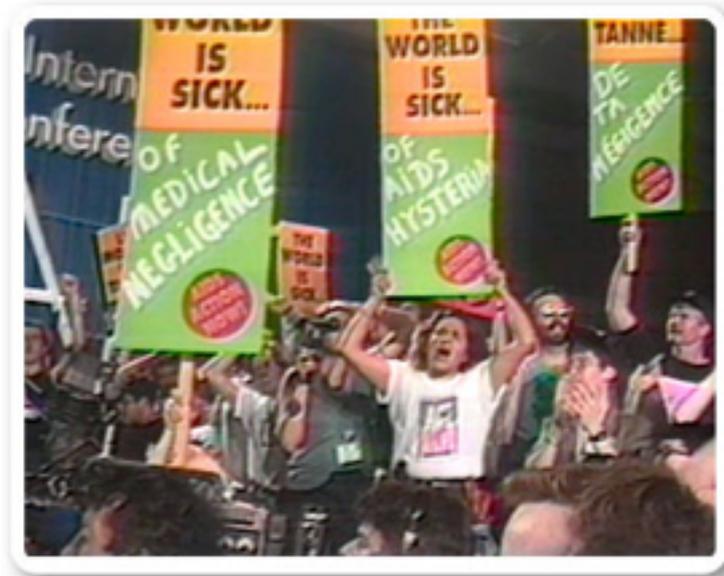


Figure 1.6 (Video still) John Greyson *The World Is Sick*, 1989, shown alongside McCaskell's account of the International AIDS Conference on the website, The Positive Side. [http://www.positiveside.ca/e/V1311/Place\\_e.htm](http://www.positiveside.ca/e/V1311/Place_e.htm)

In his reading of this event, Keenan argues against J.L. Austin's suggestion that the unauthorised, the uninvited or 'low type' of speech cannot possibly alter the proceedings of an event. These kinds of speech, Austin argues, rely on 'contextually bound formulas', in which 'corresponding speech acts are performed properly— that is to say, by the right person, addressed to the right object, using the right words, uttered at the right time and place.'<sup>136</sup> Instead he offers a reading of AIDS activist Tim McCaskill's performative infiltration, his uninvited, yet official opening of the World AIDS conference (to the cheers of more than half of the conference delegates) as the 'accomplishment of a speech act' that 'transforms the conditions in which it was spoken and received, thus transforming the political context of AIDS discourse and science'.<sup>137</sup>

Echoing the words of McCaskell himself, that 'This conference has now changed international AIDS conferences forever', Keenan suggests that the speech act creates 'the opening or invention of a new political space' in which the Montreal protestors, 'did not merely claim preexisting right' but 'claimed, and enacted, the right to claim rights, the right to politics, the right to be human, to participate in a forum and a community, to sit at a table and speak and

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<sup>136</sup> As quoted in Thomas Keenan, 'Drift: Politics and the Simulation,' *Grey Room* 21 (Fall 2005): 99.

<sup>137</sup> *ibid* 96

be heard.<sup>138</sup> He evokes Jacques Ranciere's question, 'How do you recognize that the person who is mouthing a voice in front of you is discussing matters of justice rather than expressing private pain?' Keenan suggests that in moving from the private realm into the public realm of speech, McCaskell created a platform through which the Rancierian 'part with no part,' the unseen and the unheard could claim their 'right to be human' and their 'right to be heard'.

Keenan offers an important and by now well quoted observation of the mechanisms through which political actions address what Jacques Ranciere describes as 'the very distribution of the sensible that delimits the horizons of the sayable and determines the relationship between seeing, hearing, doing, making and thinking',<sup>139</sup> might operate. He is also convincing in his argument against speech act theory and in particular, Austin's claim that the context and formal attributes of the speech act determine its power and legitimacy. However, while its simplicity and optimism tells a story we would all like to believe – that simply saying something changes everything – this analysis does not account for the contemporary conditions under which speech acts take place. Keenan's proposition that McCaskell's speech act 'invents a new political space',<sup>140</sup> replicates the emphasis that speech act theory places on understanding speaking subjects in isolation from the broader field of action in which political efficacy takes place. This isolation can be seen in two important separations in the text: first, in Keenan's separation of McCaskell's speech act from the praxes of *political organisation* and second in privileging this act of *public* speech over *private* pain.

Greg Bordowitz in his writing about the work of ACT UP and its associated collectives, warns against this kind of separation of the public forms of AIDS activism from the affinity practices that were crucial to their development. He describes the trajectory through which speaking out took place within a burgeoning movement: within small discussion groups at ACT UP's Tuesday evening local meetings; in larger debates surrounding the clarification of language in intersectional community forums that brought together artists, sex workers, drug users and others – for many their first encounter with political speech; within reflections and interventions upon the signs produced in the context of AIDS cultural analysis; and within the larger fora of

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<sup>138</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> Keenan, 'Drift: Politics and the Simulation.'

speech-making and direct action in which this grassroots work came to into broader visibility.<sup>141</sup> Even these more outward facing moments of speaking in public were communicated to the world and returned back to the groups for further reflection. This strategy was described as 'information and mobilization.' Bordowitz's own work as part of the 'Testing the Limits' video collective, who produced and circulated documentaries, was also viewed 'as organizing work'.<sup>142</sup> Following many lessons borrowed from both feminism and civil rights movements, what Bordowitz describes is a situated reading of social movement responses to the AIDS crisis, one that does not separate actions (speaking or otherwise) by individual agents, but rather understands the interplay between speech and action, subjects and affects over time. To re-read this moment of McCaskell speaking out at the AIDS conference as speaking *with* conditions, we might ask of Keenan's analysis: what were the words and gestures that led to this moment of speaking out? What speech acts did the 300 people who did not take the microphone utter in advance of entering the room? If this speech act 'changed the face of AIDS forever' – in what way? What happened at the ACT UP meeting the following Tuesday? Can we claim the invention of a 'new' space for politics, a new space of inclusion, when the politics of exclusion are rife still at the International AIDS conferences of today?

Keenan's analysis frames speech as a singular and heroic act rather than something sited amongst a series of micro and macro-political circumstances that pre-figured its occurrence. Though qualitatively different, here theory-making and political analysis can be read as a mode of public pedagogy alongside the practices of the platform and platforming discussed above. While better informed and with a sense of political investment, such a formulation of the platform perpetuates it as an agent in of 'generalised separations', where discrete speech acts are deemed to have the capacity to change everything. Keenan's analysis privileges an approach that idealises the 're-distribution of the sensible', and the inclusion of the 'low type' without careful examination of what is spoken in relation to how speaking and listening are organised across differential times and spaces of a movement.

This approach is also present in Keenan's hierarchical distinction between the public as a space of justice and the so-called private realm of emotion or pain. Linking the primacy of the speech act to the primacy of justice over that of personal pain, is symptomatic insofar as it upholds the

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<sup>141</sup> Gregg Bordowitz, *The AIDS Crisis is Ridiculous and Other Writings 1986-2003* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004).

<sup>142</sup> *ibid.*

public/private distinction and reproduces a temporally and spatially isolated relationship between political speech and the complex motivators and experiences of political action. The conditions of politics in Keenan's analysis do not include this 'private' dimension. As we have seen, however, and as I address in greater depth in the next chapter, this moment of post-Fordist neoliberalism is one in which many such distinctions have collapsed: it is a moment in which 'private pain' is publicised regularly and indeed regularly manifest in the proliferation of unmitigated political rhetorics.

Furthermore, the separation of issues of 'justice' from those of 'private pain' (and privileging the former in political discourse over the latter), replicates a tendency that Douglas Crimp, in his 1989 text, *Mourning and Militancy* warns against. Crimp argues that making such oppositions – between the acts of speaking out as public action and those of the privatised psychic pain – had a number of problematic consequences for those involved in the AIDS movement. Following earlier feminist critiques, Crimp suggests the notion that conceptions of political militancy that do not allow the entry of pain, sadness and other affective conditions of political organising, ossify politics into a series of positions: those who are inside of the system and those who are not; those who are to blame and those who are virtuous. This ossification he argues, negates the often-complex negotiations, power relations and psychic conditions that exist in the formation of political experience and action. In this analysis, though the speech act demonstrates the power in voicing, it also renders less utterable the socialisation and politicisation of 'private pain'.<sup>143</sup> Such 'private pains' (unspoken hierarchies, power plays), are often experienced in the context of organising before and beyond the event. Following this, Keenan, an important scholar committed to human rights, is by no means alone in this analysis.<sup>144</sup> Based in Arendtian distinctions, he suggests that acts in which the dynamics between the voiced and voiceless are altered, produce something like a public sphere, a place in which politics are transformed. However, as I shall demonstrate in the next chapter, such moments of 'publicity' are deeply invested with the drives of private pain and are equally, and at the same time, absorbed into the labour process of semio-production.

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<sup>143</sup> Douglas Crimp, 'Mourning and Militancy,' in *Mourning and Moralism: essays on AIDs and Queer Politics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), 33. Drawing from the work of Jacqueline Rose, Crimp suggests 'our misery is not something that can be located in the inside or the outside, in the psychic or the social ... but rather something that appears as the effect of the dichotomy itself.'

<sup>144</sup> Hannah Arendt, for example, makes this distinction between the private and public in Arendt, 'The Public Realm: Common (Excerpt from *The Human Condition*),' 104-105.

It is true that the re-distribution of voice and voiceless was changed by McCaskell's speech in that moment, and that those with HIV do indeed attend and speak at the World AIDS conferences. However, McCaskell's speech act also finds its echoes in the plethora of impassioned pleas routinely expected of AIDS NGOs in relation to big pharmaceutical companies and celebrity funders who attend such spaces. Proceedings center around microphones and large screens in the main area where high level funding decisions are made. A separate 'Global Village' exists for those grassroots organisations that cannot afford the fee.

Revisiting the trajectory of the early days of AIDS activism to the present, the project *Silent / Listen* undertaken by the sound collective Ultra-red (members of whom were themselves ACT UP organisers) staged a public programme held on the occasion at the International AIDS conference in Toronto in 2006 - the year of Keenan's article. They brought together 70 international activists, many of whom were former members of ACT UP and other collectives in the 1980s. In a large-scale performance, they spoke at seven tables lined with microphones, simultaneously discussing the conditions for activism within the AIDS struggle in response to the question 'what is the sound of AIDS activism today?' In the recordings of this event and those gathered through meetings in eight cities across North America in the year that preceded it, a recurring response can be heard: articulations of the exhaustion of inhabiting ritualistic dynamics with the funders and corporations of the AIDS industrial complex; of speaking to power and not *with* each other; of ignoring grassroots forms of organising in favour of grant deadlines and 'speaking opportunities'; and of the re-direction of experiences of pain, loss, mourning and sadness into the frenzied work of their activities for NGOs. Passionate speeches and pleas for funding have become performances and speech acts compelled by the AIDS establishment on the conference circuit. There is a haunted relationship between speaking out from the context of a strong and powerful grassroots struggle, and mandated rehearsals of voice and agency on the circuits of the NGO pharmaceutical complex. The resulting sound compilation from the Ultra-red project was perhaps aptly titled the *AIDS Uncanny*.<sup>145</sup>

After *Silent / Listen*, AIDS organisers reflected on this experience of sitting together at tables and sharing these more intimate details of the legacies of AIDS activism. They observed a marked shift in the affective register of listening amongst the cacophony of non-directed

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<sup>145</sup> Ultra-red, 'The AIDS Uncanny,' *Public Record Archive*, September 1, 2006, accessed August 30, 2017, <http://www.ultrared.org/publicrecord/archive/2-04/2-04-002/2-04-002.html>.

speech.<sup>146</sup> AIDs organisers commented on how different the dynamics of speaking and listening were from the conference, dominated by continuous streams of speakers at microphones shouting for attention. One woman commented, 'I came to this performance prepared with my usual NGO speech but, in this change in context, I said things I did not intend say, I spoke of things of which I had not spoken before'.<sup>147</sup>

The difference between these two kinds of speaking in the trajectory of AIDS activism – microphonic and directional versus collective, simultaneous and reflective– is not simply a matter of format or configuration. Neither is it a more virtuous enactment of the public sphere than the other. *Silent | Listen* however, sought to allow for those involved to speak more precisely to the complexity of lived conditions rather than the political moment distilled in the act of speaking in public. Platforms for speaking out in the absence of the complexity of conditions present a series of problems and questions. In what temporality is the speaker speaking? Is it the suspended time of 'the invention of politics' or the continuous time in which conditions of before and after can be acknowledged? This projection of a suspended time in turn produces the heroism of the speaking subject, whose negation of conditions, particularly those related to 'private pain', often fuels the perpetual frenzy of speaking, even in the absence of a space in which political action takes hold. Keenan's example is, therefore, insightful insofar as it demonstrates the way in which faith in emancipated speech acts, and their separation from other kinds of political action, endure as pivotal to our understanding of the political and the public. This faith appears to endure even in the current context in which such speech acts are separated so firmly from a sphere of negotiation or action that could be called the public sphere.

Much more could be said of this example and of the situation of those involved in AIDS activism today. Here, suffice it to say that the platform for speaking out, as articulated by Keenan and in the name of a newly formed public sphere, shares - with the platforms for dialogue and platforms for debate - powerful mechanisms of separation that emerge when public speech is privileged as the defining and definitive characteristic of social change. Platforms, in their various iterations, replicate and re-perform themselves as agents of separation that isolate and leave behind the complex assemblage of conditions that shape the lives and worlds lived on either side.

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<sup>146</sup> Recordings from these events are available at [www.ultrared.org](http://www.ultrared.org).

<sup>147</sup> Ultra-red, 'Silent | Listen,' <http://www.ultrared.org/ps08j.html>.

In this chapter, I have shown the degree to which the platform (for dialogue, debate and speaking out), whether used by the police, in seemingly innocuous events like high school debates or by well-intentioned curators and political theorists, become a tool in perpetuating what Debord describes as the 'generalized language of separation.'<sup>148</sup> The platforms of the contemporary art world can be read as part of an expanded field of public programming in which the pedagogy of a 'generalized language of separation' operates across many spheres of life and practice. The platform at once attempts to serve as a stage upon which emancipatory politics might be performed, while at the same time actively disables actions in relation to conditions, whether they are the conditions that structure such events or broader social and political conditions. They contribute to a form of public pedagogy that reproduces disinterested subjects who are required to bear little if any relation to issues discussed and debated, and naturalises a world in which the stakes of debate are arbitrary, unhinged and therefore abstract.

Rather than thinking about these separations as malicious forms of lying, we have understood them to be part of a larger process of what Ansolme describes as 'pretending': a practice linked in specific ways to the notion of the public sphere. Attributes of the public sphere are offered as the 'higher principles' for the platform; principles that legitimise particular everyday activities of lying, obscuring and speaking of issues and conditions. These attributes are appealed to as neutral and universal, ignoring how dialogue, debate and so on, have been absorbed into and reworked by regimes of labour and governance. In this context, the speaker, the voice, the spokesperson are continuously valorised, over questions of organisation, of efficacy or 'private pain'. In the next chapter, I will look at the implications of centring the speaking subject as the agent of the public and of action, and how this subject can be understood in a context in which delineations of the private and public are no longer clear or 'separate'.

These incidents of speaking without conditions are not simply about what is said, how it is said or the formats in which speaking takes place. Nor are they only related to the 're-distributions of the sensible' that occur in the moments of dialogue, debate or speaking out. Nor are they 'just a matter of semantics' (a phrase explored in the next chapter), that is, words spoken that are meaningless in relation to the pragmatics of getting down to business. In the circumstances

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<sup>148</sup> Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, point three.

examined in this chapter, there have been blockages and separations between the talk of emancipation, justice, democracy and its realisation.

It is urgent in this sea of separations, that attention and care turn to the suturing of the conditions of what is heard, what is spoken and what is acted upon. This work that I will later describe as suturing, will be explored in Part II of this thesis, Before moving on to Part II, however, I will analyse further this higher attribute of the public that is appealed to and mobilised by the platform, and to explore the social, gendered and economic possibilities of such a sphere today.

## CHAPTER 2 –

### Public Programmes as Publicness without a Public Sphere

*Everybody is aware of such banal facts. But the fact that they're banal does not mean they don't exist. What we have to do with banal facts is to discover — or try to discover — which specific and perhaps original problem is connected to them.*

- Michel Foucault.<sup>149</sup>

I begin with a story.

It takes place in an elevator, in a major cultural institution in Canada. It is an art gallery with a long history of commitment to public education. In photographs of the gallery's forefathers, a group of early modern painters, they and their oeuvre of Canadian landscapes often appear in a room full of children and adults making things: drawings, sculptures, costumes and performances. Inspired by theosophy, the Indian educator and poet Rabindranath Tagore, and a spirituality drawn from 'the land' and addressed 'to the people', these founders proclaimed the gallery to be 'a space for everyone!' Over the years, more photographs lend evidence to their case: 1984: a debate on censorship; 1986: a meeting and exhibition about AIDs; 1999: an assembly of artists in exile tell their stories. These are through-lines (it would seem), to a recent press release in which the institution's director describes the gallery as 'like a community centre.'<sup>150</sup>

In this elevator, I am excitedly relaying to a colleague the recent news of a public programme that we have just launched with community organisers in the city. The programme has created a space of encounter in which young and older people — working across boundaries firmly entrenched in the city's geography — come together to articulate collaborative responses to policing. I describe the techniques of consensus decision-making we have adapted from an anarchist workbook and my own popular education training, and our discovery of a shared desire to host events in response to the Chief of Police who, following the broken window policies of Mayor Giuliani in New York, has staged night raids on urban graffiti and hip-hop artists congregating in the city.

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<sup>149</sup> Michel Foucault, 'The Subject and Power,' in *The Essential Foucault* (The New Press, 2003), 128.

<sup>150</sup> Drawn from author's field notes

For over a year, I have worked with said colleague to envision and fundraise for this programme under the banner of democratic programming, 'an initiative for youth, by youth'.<sup>151</sup> I imagine that she will share in my excitement at what has been catalysed by our work. As I am speaking — about police, about our process and about our plans to use the gallery to launch a response — I notice that she is fidgeting and that her lips are pressed together.

She has become very uncomfortable.

I search her face to ascertain the source of her discomfort.

The elevator chimes.

We have reached her floor.

As the door opens, she looks at me for a moment in silence before asking, 'But *they* [the young people] are not *really* making the decisions are they?' she asks.

She crosses the threshold, looking back.

I am at a loss for words.

As the elevator door begins to close, our eyes search for an unarticulated border, a difference between the rhetorical space that we have shared, and a something else ... a hidden and contrary conflict, which had, until this moment, remained buried, not understood in the day-to-day pleasures and strategic necessity of our alliance.

From then on, in our work, a code of tactful silence surrounds this disagreement, an unspoken pact to maintain balance: civility across clearly uneven and conflictual terrain.

Though in many ways unremarkable, I begin this chapter with this story from within the micro-political fabric of public programming. If the last chapter situated public programming in relation to its intentions and its positioning of 'the platform' within the broader context of a public pedagogy of separation and a context of speaking and thinking without conditions, this chapter tries to address some of the shortcomings of this approach. More specifically, I

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<sup>151</sup> Author's field notes

consider how the predominant rhetoric of public programming focuses on the landscape of the public and the moments that are staged 'in public' in subtle and sometimes tacit ways that elide the wider spectrum of conditions that permeate their existence.

I approach public programming in this way because, whether assuming the role of artist, pedagogue, curator or organiser of public programmes attempting to engage in emancipatory politics, I have reached this strange and contradictory moment at the elevator door many times; where at once I stand amongst words that are said to embody the collapse of 'old' divisions (art/politics, programmer/participant, institution/activist, author/spectator, public/private) and yet feel abruptly and viscerally at the edge of their limits. In these moments, I am shaky in the knees and perplexed about how to proceed. This experience echoes the regimes of pretending described in the last chapter, in which questions related to the conditions generated by public programmes are met with uncertainty, annoyance and charges of vulgarity, in-appropriateness and naivete.

In this chapter, I try to make sense of the ways in which the complexity of such moments is not sufficiently theorised within the language and practices of publicity mobilised within the call that public programmes make to 'the public' and 'the platform' and the 'public sphere'. I will do this first, by introducing Paulo Virno's concepts of 'idle talk'<sup>152</sup> and 'publicness without a public sphere',<sup>153</sup> in which he suggests that the collapse of divisions that formerly supported a separation between politics, labour and the private realm of the *oikos* has led to their subsumption into the governing logics of over-production, financialisation and what Angela Mitropoulos describes as the 'neocontractualism'<sup>154</sup> of contemporary labour. I then examine how the question of speaking in public in public programmes has been framed in a number of attempts to critically re-think the public in recent years, and suggest that many such approaches over-valorise vocality, leadership and spokespersonship without attending to the implications of the 'private' sphere that has also found itself subsumed within this field of labour. Questions of the private, for example, care, affect, 'private pain', though present in Virno's analysis, are also where we might find his limits. Extending the work of Isabell Lorey, Angela Mitropoulos and writers who address the negotiation of public and private in political

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<sup>152</sup> Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude*, 88-89.

<sup>153</sup> *ibid* 65-68.

<sup>154</sup> Mitropoulos *Contracts and Contagions* 20

organising in North America, I try to offer a more precise critique of public programming that is alert to its ideological pitfalls. Against the limited definition of public programming as the enactment of a public sphere, the chapter approaches public programming as a set of infrastructures that convene, manage, obscure and/or address particular sets of conditions. The chapter concludes by considering how practices of 'thinking *with* conditions' might provide an antidote to the impoverished idea of 'publicness without a public sphere'. 'Thinking with conditions', as I go on to explain, entails an entirely different focus and approach that actively engages with genealogies of popular education, community organising and institutional analysis.

## 2.1 **Just a Matter of Semantics**

A habitual account of my encounter at the elevator door could easily be reduced to a conversation about the 'positions' of those on 'either side': she an institutional insider and I a somewhat compromised agitational agent from the 'outside'; she the protector of the authority of the institution of 'Art', me, a necessary but somewhat undesirable advocate of its democratisation; she a 'capitalist' and I an 'activist'. In this moment, however, we encounter a set of identities and pre-occupations in many ways foreign to such accounts. A confused and so-called democratic capitalism mingles with an anarchist-informed museology. Elitist principles consort with radical pedagogy, and a counter-police hip-hop festival skirts the cocktail parties of a formerly 'public' institution becoming experiment in public-private partnership.

Indeed, within the contradiction of my colleague's question lurked a deeper set of ambivalences in which we found ourselves at that moment (the late 1990s), in the midst of a, by then, two-decade process of forging together principles of avant-garde, emancipatory cultural practices and the forces of capitalist expansion that fall under terms such as neo-liberalism, post-Fordism, semio-capitalism and so on. In lay terms, however, this conjunctive process constituted us together in the nexus of what was described more frequently as 'the new': a 'new' way of producing culture; a 'new' way of understanding 'profit' beyond simply the production and sale of commodity goods; 'new' methods for imagining publics as both consumers and producers; and 'new' forms of so-called 'free' and flexible labour.

At the heart of this question lay the daily strangeness of experience that each of us had to negotiate and across which we were to find our alliances in spite of often irreconcilable

disagreements. Buffering us from daily confrontations were an artillery of malleable concepts and affects: of course democracy, but really (*tense smile*) 'Art'; of course 'by youth', but really (*wink*) 'by us'; of course emancipation, but really (*knowing stare*), experience economy.

It is customary in workplace parlance – as it was when I mentioned this incident to a colleague — to describe such disagreements as being *just a matter of 'semantics'*. The customary use of the term 'semantics' or 'just a matter of semantics' to dismiss the slippage between what is said, what is meant and further what is said and what is actualised, is telling. Semantics, in one of its earlier usages, refers to 'the meaning of words',<sup>155</sup> but it can also signify 'the meanings of words and phrases in a particular context'.<sup>156</sup> In the above anecdote, the term 'semantics' is used to foreclose discussion about the appropriate use of language on the grounds that words are used simply as a means to an end, to get along or to get things done. In this instrumental view of language as a transparent sign system, it is assumed that words are subordinate to the realm of action, regardless of the knowing looks, awkward silences or shaky knees that surround these pragmatic verbal exchanges.

This misuse or slippage in the term 'semantics', and the unhinging of the meaning of the words and phrases in a particular context from the life world to which they refer, is symptomatic of what Paulo Virno, in his analysis of the performative speech practices characteristic of post-Fordism, describes as 'idle talk'. Drawing on Heidegger's work in *Being and Time*, Virno defines 'idle talk' as a characteristic of the anonymous 'one' (one's friends, one's car) living an 'unauthentic life', whose linguistic utterances demonstrate 'the possibility of understanding everything without previously making the thing one's own'.<sup>157</sup>

Upon the foundation of Saussurian semiotics as described by Roland Barthes,<sup>158</sup> it might seem obvious to suggest that the relation between the sign and its signifier and the signified is already engaged in a degree of duplicity. For Barthes, this duplicity is an 'arbitrariness' that emerges from the dialectical relationship between *langue*, which describes the social,

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<sup>155</sup> Specifically, the early use of the term 'semantics' refers to the use of words to describe very specific conditions such as the weather, as described in Robert Barnhart, *Dictionary of Etymology* (New York: Chambers Harrap Publishers Ltd, 1998).

<sup>156</sup> This latter definition comes from Merriam Webster's Learners Dictionary, ictionaryr d <http://www.learnersdictionary.com/definition/semantics>.

<sup>157</sup> Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude*, 88-89.

<sup>158</sup> Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), 3.

impersonal phenomenon of language as a system of *signs*, and *parole*, which describes the personal phenomenon of language as a series of *speech acts*. Saussure describes the distance between the individual, who has a faculty for language, and the social, which is language outside or beyond the faculty to observe, to hear and make sounds. This 'individual mechanism' must be seen as separate from the 'general product', that is language as a whole. This notion of language suggests a fundamental split between the language that is expressed by and experienced in the body, and the language that is social and therefore always already foreign or abstract.

Nonetheless, at the level of the group, Barthes suggests that new terms or linguistic modifications that emerge from practices in life often enter into language at the hands (or mouths) of a particular set of people – the 'logo-techniques'<sup>159</sup> as Barthes calls them. They are adopted into 'the language' and then used by others for whom there is no relation to these terms. Terms then, are created 'not by the speaking mass but by a deciding group'.<sup>160</sup> Barthes adds a third element to Saussure's terms to account for those systems of language without a speech component, which he calls 'matter'. Matter alludes to those referents in the real to which the language refers, but of which it does not yet speak.<sup>161</sup> While the transitions between matter, the 'deciding group' and the masses who take on new terms are not essential in character, they are charged by a set of relations. In the 'idle talk' that is described by Virno in relation to our present moment, this relation customarily disappears. Speech acts become autonomous, free from 'the obligation of giving a faithful reproduction of truth'<sup>162</sup> (or, as Barthes would say, the matter or conditions to which they refer). One's use of language has no responsibility and is therefore able to invent and experiment with discourses on the fly, in relation to itself. Where in Heidegger's configuration the idleness in idle talk refers to a lack of activity,<sup>163</sup> in Virno's account, idle talk refers to pure activity, that is, talk as enacted not only *in*

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<sup>159</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>160</sup> Ferdinand de Saussure, *Third Course of Lectures on General Linguistics (1910-1911)* (Pergamon Press, 1993), reproduced on [www.marxists.org](http://www.marxists.org).

<sup>161</sup> Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, 32.

<sup>162</sup> Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude*, 88-89.

<sup>163</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962), 220.

but as the production process.<sup>164</sup> Language, performed as speech, then takes on the appearance of a perpetual new, but without any responsibility to the world from which it emerges; that is, from its conditions.

The dismissive utterance 'that's just a matter of semantics' is then symptomatic of the degree to which the practice of unhinging terms from conditions has been naturalised in these forms of work. This chapter probes the separation of the last, not as proponents of speech act theory, such as J.L. Austin might do, in order to assert that there is a hierarchy of speech acts or an efficacy or validity of particular words or performances over others. Rather, it is an attempt to understand the implications of the customary separation of words from their meanings and associated actions in public programming. What occurs in the missed encounters between the speaking of terms like 'democracy', 'resistance' and 'social justice' and the conditions under which they are spoken? What terrain for speaking and indeed thinking and acting in public are we left with?

Following Virno, I will probe this problem in relation to the re-configuration of the public sphere that has taken place under neo-liberalism, in which we cannot assume that publicness or the staging of events in public necessarily constitutes the conditions for addressing the political nor the creation of effective action. I will argue that beyond 'just a matter of semantics', the enactment of idle talk in the wake of a dismantled public sphere is part of the broader practice of *thinking without conditions* that is the cause of both confusion and stagnation in the micro scale of everyday interactions and the macro scale of articulated political struggle.

## 2.2 A Political Kind of Speech

The de-coupling of language from the matter and social processes to which it refers has crucial implications. As I wrote in the last chapter, these separations in the public programming of contemporary arts habitually bar processes of social and political action in relation to the urgent questions they proclaim to address. In the expanded fields of public programming drawn from practices in education and law, I demonstrated how these separations produce public pedagogies that feign democratic practices, covering over relations of force and

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<sup>164</sup> Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude*, 88-89. Bifo also defines a specific kind of overproduction in semio-capitalism as 'specifically semiotic; an infinite excess of signs circulates ... and saturates individual and collective attention' of Berardi, *Precarious Rhapsody*.

coercion and diverting the antagonism of the most actively marginalised in society. In political analysis, they put the organisational processes of the private or non-spectacular under erasure. In the political landscape more generally, it is not difficult to see how language unhinged from its 'deciding groups' has led to an increase in hate speech, trolling and their affiliated actions, fuelling reactionary politics and an increasingly 'unreal' relationship between the language of politics and our everyday experiences.

To understand how this unhinging takes place more fully, I return to Barthes, who, as I have outlined, suggests that the dialectic relationship between speech and 'the Language' is dynamic because groups of people within somewhat specialist fields use, but also invent *terms*. Some of those inventions become part of the language as a whole. The relationship is hierarchical and non-consensual, as he says (as some become the speaking subjects of new terms created by others). Nonetheless, a relationship between matter, context and the mass of speaking subjects exists. Speech acts, as they enter into language, are tethered by the structures of language to their epoch and anthropological status: they emerge through specific groups that are related to specific tasks that are themselves related to specific elements or matter in a society. Barthes is very clear that the impetus for the creation and speaking of new terms and linguistic structure is born of a variety of anthropological necessities of the world. Such anthropological necessities include: (1) when new needs come into existence i.e. changes in custom that call for new forms of clothing or changes in the political climate that call for new terms; (2) when materials in production have either become scarce or are more frequently used calling for the generation of new terms; (3) when ideologies, taboos or customs render particular words unspeakable.<sup>165</sup> While it is true that specialist communities usually coin these new terms, their impetus emerges from issues with widespread implications for something that we might describe as public or common concerns.

According to Virno, terms and linguistic forms are born in these 'special spaces'.<sup>166</sup> From these special places, they move into general language through their negotiation in a realm described as the public or the public sphere. In the context of post-Fordism however, this configuration no longer holds. Neither those specialist communities of articulation nor the public sphere in

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<sup>165</sup> Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, 32.

<sup>166</sup> Virno here refers to Aristotle's *topoi idioi*. Paolo Virno 'Publicness of the Intellect. Non-State Public Sphere and the Multitude' in *Transversal* 2001. <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0605/virno/en> (last accessed 20 September, 2007)

which they might be taken up and negotiated by the masses exists as such. In the absence of this public sphere, specialist spaces have been replaced by 'common places', that is, by a generalised language, a set of 'generic' logical-linguistic forms. Virno's claim that the public sphere no longer exists does not mean that there are no activities that take place in public or that there are no 'common places' in which people congregate and speak together, though such spaces that do not exist for profit are becoming increasingly rare. The point is rather that the public sphere no longer provides a central compass and set of customs for a common life, nor a realm in which terms and their associated actions can negotiate what would otherwise be a free-form 'unchecked proliferation of hierarchies'.<sup>167</sup> As Hannah Arendt suggests, the public sphere's originary purpose in ancient Greek society was to provide an immortalised space in which common things might be negotiated and in which people could be seen and heard.<sup>168</sup> This space stood in contrast to the private realm of the family; a space in which personalities reign unmediated. Arendt's distinction between the public and private sphere raises further questions about the fate of the public sphere in a post-Fordist economy where the distinction between public and private becomes increasingly blurred. To what extent is the disappearance of the public sphere related to the neo-liberal conflation of the state and the corporation? And how does the affect associated with the precarious conditions of labour under post-Fordism register this blurring of the public/private distinction?

If the disintegration of the public sphere is connected to the conflation of state and corporation, it is important to recognise that this conflation also erodes distinctions between the personal and the public and the individual and the collective. Virno describes this not only in relation to the role of the state, but also in relation to the emotions of fear and anguish that accompany the insecurities of neo-liberalism. Where prior to this moment fear would have been associated with the realm of the public, to be negotiated through public discussion and the instigation of particular actions, anguish, on the other hand, was associated with the experience of the personal and the private. In the context of the increased insecurity of housing, employment and location, and a heightened sense of personal risk, a general sensation of 'not feeling at home' collapses the distinction between these two emotions. Fear and anguish are experienced by the multitude and therefore present public feelings but they

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<sup>167</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> Hannah Arendt 'The Human Condition' excerpts re-printed in Jostein Gripsrud, Hallvard Moe, Anders Molander, Graham Murdock (eds) *The Idea of the Public Sphere* (Lexington Books 2010) 104-6

are not negotiated in a public sphere. Such a tendency had already been identified by Jürgen Habermas in his observation that the onset of mass mediatisation produced what he called a 'secondary realm of intimacy',<sup>169</sup> a generalising or making public of an intimate sphere that had historically been 'bracketed off' in the name of rational public discourse. Under post-Fordist conditions, this making public of the intimate becomes even more pronounced. Virno argues that the condition of fear and anguish experienced by 'the many' is increasingly generalized. It is, perhaps, unsurprising, therefore, that 'the many' also 'place this experience at the centre of their social and political praxis.' In this configuration, in which the concept of 'the people' is replaced by the multitude, the public or public sphere is also replaced, by a kind of busy-ness, of which idle talk is symptomatic. Idle talk, in other words, can be understood as an expression of reassurance or an attempt to find comfort or relief from feeling anguish in ways and through means that are often contradictory, hypocritical or even diametrically opposed. In the examples of debate and the 'mock trial' described in the last chapter, for example, one can see how the formalities of public speech attempt to divert conflict and the potentially difficult knowledge of the school and the court room. The example of AIDs organising, demonstrated the degree to which the 'private pain' of the AIDS crisis now manifests in exhausting regimes of over-communication.

Virno argues that the way in which mass mediatised language narrates and 'makes public' most aspects of life, fills in the gap of the public sphere. Political disagreements are subjected to the laws of the production of spectacle with politics reduced to a set of common binary forms that do not conform to experience. Where at one time, different groups based in particular experiences might have produced new terms and new ways of speaking politics, in the current moment, intellectuals invested in reproducing the mediatised spectacle apparatus become the ultimate 'deciding group'.

Whereas Habermas' claims that the mass media render the 'public sphere in appearance only', Virno is concerned with how this form of public and spectacularised political speech paradoxically operates as a regime of commodification.<sup>170</sup> This regime produces a structure of feeling in which it becomes increasingly difficult to separate oneself from the demands and subjectivation processes of labour. One is made to *feel* political or feel as if one is participating

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<sup>169</sup> Habermas, *The Structural Transformation Of The Public Sphere: An Inquiry Into A Category Of Bourgeois Society*, 172.

<sup>170</sup> Jürgen Habermas, 1989. *The structural transformation of the public sphere*. Cambridge: Polity Press.  
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in a public conversation about the political, without there needing to be any real political consequences to that conversation. This separation between the rhetorical performance and practice of radical politics is what Virno terms the experience of *publicness without a public sphere*. The practice of political action is rendered as a *political kind of speech*. It is at once unhinged from its referents, replaced by a set of forms and coupled with the hierarchies and logic of profit associated with production. Virno distinguishes this feeling of publicness or a political kind of speech from the notion of the public sphere when he argues that, 'the many can tend to common affairs'.<sup>171</sup>

There is, of course, a danger of over-stating the political implications of Virno's argument: of overwriting the many people engaged in political action and the many who continue to fight for social justice or democracy, and against racism in very concrete ways. His point, and one that is familiar in the experiences of attempted political action today, is that such struggles often take place at the margins, without a consistent public context of negotiation and rendered into formulaic binaries and motifs by mediated discourse.

The enactment of a *political kind of speech* through mediatic channels, in the absence of a shared political realm of action or a *public sphere*, is experienced profoundly by many 'public' workers. Drawing from research and practice in the world of public management, Stefano Harney identifies how this unhinging of politics from its grounding in any idea of the state and its social role, results in a flattening of the discursive field wherein 'to be for or against or unsure of bureaucracy is the limit of politics' amongst civil servants. This kind of repetitive linguistic operation obscures the re-configuration of the state that is performed by them on a daily basis. 'It is not just that to enact politics as "bureaucracy versus freedom" forecloses the pursuit of a more serious engagement with what Marx called the realm of freedom', argues Harney, 'It is that it allows actually existing state power to operate outside of this enunciated politics ...'.<sup>172</sup>

Virno's account of a political *kind* of speech and Harney's analysis of its consequences for former public-sector roles lays out the general parameters of what we might describe as *speaking without conditions*, that is a series of performative practices that constantly and

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<sup>171</sup> Virno, *A Grammar Of The Multitude*, 65-68.

<sup>172</sup> Stefano Harney, 'Governance, State, and Living Labour,' *aCultural Logic*, 2006, <http://clogic.eserver.org/2006/harney.html>.

repetitively re-purpose and subsume political speech, in the absence of a public sphere, while actively ignoring the conditions of production. Here, conditions, as I will argue in the next Part In more detail, must be understood both as the context - the materials, the social and immaterial relations of production and reproduction at play in a milieu - as well as the capacity for and connection to operations of conditioning; those processes of subjectivation that must coincide with any attempt to produce new realities.

Considered in relation to these debates about publicness without a public sphere, the slippage articulated in the use of the adverb *really* in the sentence uttered at the elevator door ('the young people aren't *really* making the decisions'), can be seen to have a double meaning, which merits further comment. It conveys both the experience of uneasiness that pervades many aspects of working life and also a secret, rarely verbalised or addressed *in public*. Such moments are rarely examined or considered worthy of critical examination, for example, the point of departure for public programmes, events, newspaper articles or blog posts that fuel idle talk. 'Idle talk' in the context of *speaking without conditions* is therefore not idle at all. It rather facilitates the repeated action of separation between critical and political language and critical and political consequence.

### 2.3 From Speaking without Conditions to Thinking without Conditions

For Virno, the separation of content and consequence is part of the dismantling of the public sphere, in which public sentiment deriving from experiences might otherwise be expressed and negotiated towards action. Virno loosely follows Hannah Arendt's account of the three central categories of labour, intellect and action, which have historically functioned as the condition of possibility for the existence of a public sphere. Under contemporary neo-liberal conditions, Virno claims, these categories are no longer tenable as separate categories. Rather, he suggests, the latter two categories, *intellect* and *action*, have been subsumed by the former, *labour*.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Virno's analysis differs from Arendt's in so far as the distinction she makes is between Work and Labour. Labour for Arendt is the work of life and of living, whereas work is an artificial world, a world constructed by man for man. In Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 7.

In the pre-Marxist configuration of the *polis*, the intellect was seen as the quiet space for contemplation: the 'life of the mind', as Arendt puts it.<sup>174</sup> As opposed to the sphere of public speaking and political action in which things and people appear, the intellect was the purview of the private and separate, and a stranger to political action. Under contemporary neoliberal conditions, the feeling of anguish and of 'being without a home' experienced by so many, makes public the experience of such contemplation. Those who do not feel at home constitute a mass of contemplating subjects. This is not to say that Virno suggests that this generalisation takes place at the hands of highly educated intellectuals, but that this central characteristic of the intellect — its separation from the political sphere of action and its dwelling in personal abstractions — is replicated in linguistic forms, forms that are themselves part of the capitalist labour process.

Other institutions of the intellect, such as universities (or art galleries) once seen to be an extension of this stranger status of the intellect - and thought to be exceptional or autonomous spaces to those of the capitalist practices of labour, outside spaces informing the public sphere, Virno argues - are also subservient to these processes of production. One only has to look as far as a New Labour research document suggesting that publicly supported knowledge production should be harnessed for 'wealth creation', to understand the degree to which this has taken place.<sup>175</sup> While the university is still a place of association whose position is segregated from the everyday, this segregation takes place at the hands of private academic publishers, with monopolies subsidised by the state and through measures such as the Research Assessment Exercises and Research Excellence Frameworks, which privilege private publishing enterprises over those that contribute to communalised processes.<sup>176</sup>

Equally, arts organisations and their public programming apparatus stage public forms of contemplation as part of an accelerated production of cultural products and experiences. While staged as scenes of public contemplation, as discussed in the last chapter, the distinct

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<sup>174</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>175</sup> The details of this move to knowledge transfer as the basis for wealth creation can be found in John Baker, 'Creating Knowledge, Creating Wealth: Realising the Economic Potential of Public Sector Research Establishments. A Report by the John Baker to the Minister for Science and the Financial Secretary to the Treasury,' HM Treasury, August, 1999; and in the Knowledge Transfer Partnerships introduced by the UK Economic and Social Research Council in 2009, with the stated goal to 'strengthen the UK's competitiveness and wealth creation by enabling research organisations to apply their research knowledge to important business problems.'

<sup>176</sup> George Monbiot, 'The Lairds of Learning,' *The Guardian*, August 30, 2011.

problems addressed often bear no relationship to the problems faced by the organisations and individuals who stage them or attend. And, in spite of the extensive energies that go into staging such events, whether intentionally or not, they produce little capacity for engaging topics beyond the moment of the event. They are both a mechanism and a symptom of the generalisation of the separation of the intellect. Virno uses the example of the *séance* (a metaphor he derives from Arendt) to describe the 'unreal' feeling of these contemporary forms of publicness.<sup>177</sup> In the *séance*, the participants hold hands, they are present together, sometimes deeply connected to each other, but not to any space beyond the room in which the ritual is staged. In a strange twist of fate and capital, the intellectual's autonomous separation from the world is generalised, spread as a condition of the masses as those spaces designated for thought also become sites for the production of knowledge capital.

At the same time, the other notion of intellect, that proposed by Marx in the *Grundrisse* as the 'General Intellect'<sup>178</sup> - that public intelligence developed through human work and know-how, the knowledge born through collective discussion, dissent and innovation — also finds itself subservient to the labour process. Antagonisms and innovations that might have emerged from the collective or common knowledge pool, from the ability of people to think and act practically, have been, since the 1970s, incorporated into production through the streamlining of cooperation, problem-solving and everyday know-how into management of the workplace strategies. While these enactments of the 'General Intellect' may have, in the past, influenced political action via a public sphere and resulted in social and worker antagonism, their narratives and often the very process of knowledge sharing itself is brought into every day work, which in turn constantly adapts itself to incorporate new forms of life, innovation and dissent. Where antagonisms may exist, they are difficult to speak in such a way that resonates politically. It is not simply because there is less participation in trade unions that worker dissent does not manifest in regular, widespread change, but rather because the production process makes use of this 'General Intellect', incorporates its know-how, its antagonisms and its associated semiotic and critically enacted inventions, finding new ways to incorporate and thereby to manage them. This is not a novel process, but an intensification of what Mario Tronti

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<sup>177</sup> Paolo Virno, *Publicness of the Intellect*

<sup>178</sup> Karl Marx, 'Economic Manuscripts of 1857–58 [the *Grundrisse*, conclusion]', in *Marx Engels Collected Works*, Volume 29 (New York: International Publishers, 1987), 92.

suggested in relation to the 1970s workerist movements: namely that 'capitalist power seeks to use the workers' antagonistic will-to-struggle as a motor of its own development'.<sup>179</sup>

Virno describes how struggles for democracy, diversity, equality and their associated terms in this context, have become functions of managerial culture. This managerial culture does not only relate to workers but to the mass-mediatised realm of communications, which places attributes of the general intellect into the hands of the many, via a constant stream of self-help and self-management advice. Thus, this mass-mediatised world is itself part and parcel of the process of production. Consumers are equally agents of its reproduction. There is, then, no place outside of this mediatised sphere - no place like that described by Kant in *What is Enlightenment?* - in which one might perform freedom from the confines of what is possible in one's commissioned and consumerist labour; the space, that is, in which a priest 'might be free of his congregation' or the intellectual of the relations that frame his ideas as work in the university.<sup>180</sup>

Virno's account is useful in laying out the parameters of a world in which the intellect, political action and a re-figured labour process merge together in the process of capitalist production. It suggests that this world is no longer about spheres of reference nor specific practices, but a set of generalised conditions that are evidenced through a kind of performative speaking and thinking – the thinking of a general intellect re-purposed for the creation of not only post-Fordist workers, but neo-liberal subjectivities. What is characteristic of the generalised, public kind of thinking is that it takes on the character of the life of the mind, that is its abstraction and retreat from conditions. The excessive political kind of speech that is 'just a matter of semantics' reflects this paradox of being at once intensely abstracted, intensely intimate and intensely public.

Though it may be true, as Virno suggests, that post-Fordism produces a context in which such separations can operate across traditional class divisions, it is clear from the examples provided in the last chapter, that they are directed at and most violently and deeply experienced by those communities who would have the most to gain from dissent, those who are the most

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<sup>179</sup> Mario Tronti, 'The Strategy of Refusal,' in *Autonomia: Post-Political Politics*, eds. Sylvère Lotringer and Christian Marazzi (New York: Semiotext(e), 1980), 29.

<sup>180</sup> Immanuel Kant. *Practical Philosophy*, (Cambridge University Press, translated and edited by Mary J. Gregor, 1996) 19

disenfranchised, those with the most stake in the 'issues' or 'themes' platformed, and who are often the least represented in their organisational ranks.

Here, an emphasis on speaking *without* but also *over* conditions, might be read as a subset of a broader tendency, that is *thinking without conditions*: a context in which this contemplative separation of thought from action is imported into the context of public thinking without a public sphere; a context in which the question, 'where are we when we think?' posed by Arendt and taken up later in this chapter, goes routinely unanswered.<sup>181</sup>

## 2.4 The Implications of Entanglement: From Speaking Out to the Audition

To understand how the relationship between language and its necessity — the general intellect and the 'deciding groups' — have been subsumed into regimes of production, we must understand the degree to which labour has been re-structured using communications as its model. This understanding emerges not only in relation to the various forms of broadcast, image-making and theatricalised forms of work that exist in the current economy, but in the various ways in which the relations of spectacle are enacted within the everyday. As we read in the last chapter, communicative attributes, such as one's ability to speak with a kind of urgency, to argue one's point, to plea passionately, to 'separate the people from the problem', to facilitate a productive encounter, to 'harness' collective knowledge and opinion, to read and comprehend quickly, to multi-task by way of fast-talking, to develop a command over acronyms and regularly used phrases, themselves embody the forms of separation described of spectacle.

A work or rather the re-enactment of a work, by the artist Martha Rosler, is instructive in understanding the movement from an understanding of public speech as something that takes place within the public sphere and public speech as a practice of labour. Based on *Semiotics of Kitchen*, the canonical single channel video performance for television monitor made by Rosler in 1971, *Semiotics of the Kitchen: An Audition* was created at the Whitechapel in 2003 as a public programme, the documentation of which turned into a film in 2011. The original *Semiotics of the Kitchen* was performed by a single woman (Rosler), speaking to the public. Shot like a television cooking programme gone wrong, the artist appears on her own, on a

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<sup>181</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind: Thinking, Vol. 1*. (N.Y.: A Harvest Book, 1978), 197.

kitchen set 'naming her oppression',<sup>182</sup> as Rosler described it, by connecting the lexicon of kitchen signs, 'A for Apron, S for Spatula', to their material manifestations, the objects in the kitchen. Each term is marked through a series of bold and increasingly aggressive bodily gestures. Here, the context of the media as a platform for public speech, allowed her to direct her gaze and intention upon the audience in an identified and identifiable realm, and to foreground the erasure of the conditions of the private sphere and domestic labour within this lexicon of the public.



Figure 2.1 Martha Rosler, (video still) *Semiotics of the Kitchen*, 1971

In contrast, the 2003 re-enactment or 'audition' held as part of the 'Short History of Performance' public programme and exhibition at London's Whitechapel Gallery, invited 26 women to compete for the part of the artist in the original work. On a mock live television set, small groups of women cycled through the alphabet, each trying out gestures with kitchen tools, testing performances, awkwardly giggling, chatting on the side and attempting to achieve the aggression and passion of the original work. Cameras were present and the auditions were presented on television monitors around the gallery viewing space but, far from a typical television viewing experience, the audience wandered between sets, screens and performers seemingly unsure where to focus their attention. Relations between the auditioning women, Rosler, the apparatus of the kitchen and the viewing public did not privilege one particular stage but rather staged a relationship between the three.

Performers and attendees could each be overheard. Some spoke excitedly of the non-hierarchical nature of the performance, as compared to the uni-directional screen performance

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<sup>182</sup> Author's field notes

of 'Semiotics' first iteration. Others mentioned the quality of the performance, for instance, one blogger suggested: 'Some of the performance participants hammed it up, others were deadpan, I think they all got a kick out of taking part'.<sup>183</sup> Rosler herself described the event as an exercise in feminist empowerment, stating 'they built up their confidence. At the end of the process I really felt like we were giving a communal gift to the audience'.<sup>184</sup>

Beyond these cursory statements or its overall contextualisation in relation to events on 'Art and Food' in subsequent years, Rosler's work calls for a more complex reading. If the stakes of Rosler's original performance lay in articulating the relationship between language, communicative action and the private sphere, by speaking oppression from *within* the language of the mediatic spectacle as a way to access the public sphere, Rosler suggests the opposite, to move, as she instructed performers, out of the frame and 'into the world'. The movement it charted — from the original performance, an action in which the domestic is spoken into the public sphere, to a blurring of the domestic with the 'real world' - is suggestive of Virno's discussion of the dissolution of earlier linguistic divisions between labour, action and the private. Here, Rosler suggests the degree to which the fields of the domestic, the spectacle, the performative, the political and the spectacular have become deeply entangled.

Equally, Rosler's re-contextualisation of the speech act from that of a single speaker to one of convivial engagement of collective and passionate speech, which is less a provocation between public and private and more of a 'communal gift', took place in the name of an 'audition', a hierarchical order of production, offering nothing but the faint possibility of future gain. This oscillation between the possibility of a shared encounter, its relationality and communal gifting and the competitive zeal of the performative auditioning of the precariat, resonates with the re-shaped political culture described by Virno, in which such gestures may be intense and affectively charged in the moment, and may also enact a 'communal gift' of publicness, yet find no public sphere.

The un-speakability of this slippage was revealed markedly in the moment after the performance, during the public programme's Q and A, in which Rosler was invited to comment on the work and no one spoke of the mirroring of the condition of the audition of the

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<sup>183</sup> Lucas Ihlein, 'Martha Rosler, Carey Young at the Whitechapel Gallery,' *Bilateral* (blog), <http://www.lucazoid.com/bilateral/martha-rosler-carey-young-at-the-whitechapel-gallery/>.

<sup>184</sup> Quoted on *ibid*.

performance and those of the participating women, who were themselves precarious cultural workers working for free. The set of confusions at play — between the performance of passion for Rosler's original work, the experience of being together, the relationally of performers, mediating between the audience and the cameras, their 'confidence' and the resonance of this performance with the regular performances of audition required of precarious cultural workers within the often-aggressive conditions of the contemporary art world — were strangely silent. Here, the domestic was a motif but did and could not open up onto the discursive terrain of the seemingly private world of conditions. This was due in part to the conventions of politeness but also due to the banality or everydayness of the mirroring itself, in which the affects of political performance are caught up in relations of exploitation. In this circumstance, it is increasingly difficult to know to whom one directs the question of conditions. Who, in this audition, was the boss? The camera? Rosler? The instruction? The gallery? The kitchen tools? The set?



Figure 2.2: Martha Rosler. (video still)

*Semiotics of the Kitchen: Audition, 2003.*<sup>185</sup>

This is not a condemnation of Rosler's project for its poor conditions, but rather a testament to the accuracy of its reading of contemporary culture. The project's mirroring of conditions and the impossibility of addressing them in the concrete are both a testament to the apt reading and depiction of the contemporary produced by Rosler's re-make as an enactment and a symptom of publicness without a public sphere. Here we witnessed the performance of a

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<sup>185</sup> This image appears with the article titled 'Gastro-Vision. Martha Rosler's Kitchen Mise en Scene,' Contemporary Confections, <http://www.contemporaryconfections.com/2011/01/gastro-vision-martha-roslers-kitchen.html> (last accessed August 10, 2016, link broken).

*political kind of speech in its mobilisation of the general intellect towards the production of labour.*

There are three issues that we can take from Rosler's re-enactment that are particularly apposite to the broader analysis of thinking without conditions will be explored in more detail in the next sections. First, the slippage between labouring and non-labouring life that takes place in the work between the field of relations, i.e. collective modes of empowerment and 'confidence building' and the competitive engine of audition. I will take this up in relation to the broader implications of these aspects of life and indeed public programming falling into the realm of labour and embodied value production narrated by Virno, Berardi and others. Second, is the fact that although differently configured, Rosler, in both her original performance and the re-enactment suggests that the provocation of the public with the private, whether delivered by a single voice or a polyphony of voices making a 'communal gift', takes place at the hands (or vocal chords) of the speaking subject. Here I will look at the persistence of vocality as a trope within the notion of publicness in both the public programming examples of the last chapter, and indeed in Virno's own analysis and within contemporary advocates of the public sphere, asking if we might move to paradigms that take up the question of publicness without replicating the centrality of the voice? Third, is nonetheless Rosler's persistence in bringing the domestic or 'private' realm into a re-configured form of publicness across the two performances. Here, I will identify some possibilities for moving beyond a lament for the end of the public sphere and towards questions of what the entanglements of the public and private might provide beyond the more ominous sensations described by Virno.

## **2.5 The Poverty of Communication in Labour**

'Nobody,' says Virno, 'is as poor as those who see their own relation to the presence of others, that is to say their own communicative faculty, their own possession of a language, reduced to wage labour'.<sup>186</sup> However, as in both Rosler's performance and in Virno's analysis, it is not simply that the intellect and politics are bought and sold, nor the matter of the worker's alienation that is at issue in this transformation. If this were the case it would be still be possible to de-limit one's waged work from one's unwaged work. Rather, in this world narrated by Virno and depicted by Rosler, the intellect, the 'General Intellect' and the capacity for political action

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<sup>186</sup> Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude*, 63.

are put to work in a different kind of labour, which is itself transfigured by the collapse between these former spheres of reference.

The figure of this labour *par excellence* is, for Virno, the virtuoso; the endlessly public performer. This performing, 'virtuosic' labourer is presented as an opportunistic self in the plethora of communicative or language-based industries in which work takes place through continuous semiotic production - call centre operators, service workers, counsellors, writers, marketers, journalists, cultural workers, teachers, media presenters - but also to those in more traditional or manual industries in which team-work, co-operation, creative management and innovation have become primary features. Labour now goes well beyond the wage, beyond possible payback. Networking, lunching, writing blog entries, 'active', 'experiential' or 'participatory' consumption, and many other forms of purely communicative action or precarious labour, bear nothing but the glimmer of a future financial reward. Performance here exists as a figure, but also as a disciplinary trope. As John McKenzie has laid out in his book *Perform or Else*, even the term performance has been activated across fields of labour, technology and art, with fields like 'performance management' and valuations like 'performance indicators' inter-relating with questions of performance art and experimentation.<sup>187</sup>

As Dimitris Papadopoulos suggests, value production here is 'extensified' in so far as work becomes dispersed and socialised through endless virtuosic performances, but also in so far as it moves outside 'the singular worker'. It is rather embodied as 'an indissoluble characteristic of the[ir] whole situated social existence'.<sup>188</sup> The situated and embodied quality of work includes both labour and 'all of the things and artefacts that constitute the worlds in which we exist', including our social relations as well as the broader networks and commons we inhabit and activate in our everyday lives. This also means all of the tools, strategies, relations, 'tricks, people and infrastructures' we use to survive the feeling of un-homeliness of precarious life conditions.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> John McKenzie, *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance* (London: Routledge, 2001), 1-10.

<sup>188</sup> Dimitris Papadopoulos, Niamh Stephenson and Vassilis Tsianos, *Escape Routes: Control and Subversion in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Pluto Press, 2008).

<sup>189</sup> D. Papadopoulos and J. Graham, 'A Tale with Three Endings: The Precarious movement Then and Now' (unpublished paper, 2017).

Considered in relation to this expanded sense of publicity in labour, the more optimistic claims made for Rosler's performance, in terms of its relationality and offer of a 'communal gift' in the shape of performance, take on a particular meaning that has significant implications for understanding the paradoxes of thinking without conditions. The same can be said of the narrations of public programmes in contemporary art discussed in the introduction: that they be, as artist and curator Pablo Helguera suggests, the marker of a progressive and experimental performative tendency in the field of contemporary art. Or, in the words of Sally Tallant, that public programmers are instigators of a more 'integrated' approach, disrupted traditional hierarchies of production. If the figure of the event performer or virtuoso is a central paradigm of labour and not its experimental outsider, and if the attributes of life's collaborative relations are integral to the paradigm of value production, then the strange 'mirroring' of Rosler's performance — of enacting both 'empowerment', precarity and alienation must be considered. Here, we must read public programming not as a site of transgression but one of daily negotiation and struggle for the ability to make use of common resources for the mutuality and autonomy of life's networks. This poses questions towards a relational understanding of Helguera and Tallant's notions of public programming as well as those drawn from Bourriaud's notion of 'relational aesthetics', which narrates a turn in contemporary art at the same time as the 'relational' has become an important activator for capital — both in terms of the re-fashioning of consumers as producers through what Pine and Gilmore describe as the 'experience economy' but also, at a deeper level, in the extraction of value from forms of living and life itself.

This extraction of value is not seamless. While value is embodied and performed through the life processes of the worker, this experience is not one of simple easy, creative, experimentation or transgression, but rather one in which the endlessness of communicative performance intersects with particular vectors of governance and control that both propel and halt, capture and re-orient production. This control, described by Isabell Lorey as 'governmental precarization',<sup>190</sup> takes place along lines that attempt to cut across and appropriate the 'existential continuum of people' by measuring labour-power,<sup>191</sup> expropriating 'common' infrastructures of cooperation through property rights, and the re-privatisation of

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<sup>190</sup> Isabell Lorey, 'Governmental Precarisation,' *Transversal*, 0811 (January 2011), <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0811/lorey/en>.

<sup>191</sup> See for example Massimo de Angelis and David Harvie, "'Cognitive Capitalism" and the Rat-Race: How Capital Measures Immaterial Labour in British Universities,' *Historical Materialism*, 17, 3 (2009): 3–30.

knowledge and information through the individualisation and privatisation of the costs of social reproduction,<sup>192</sup> and through the transformation of citizenship into a valve for deeming degrees of exploitation for subjects of labour depending on their varied access to citizenship rights.<sup>193</sup> The virtuoso's desire to communicate and to perform beyond the demands of capital are, then, regularly fragmented, re-routed and curtailed by these various mechanisms of control. Yet the halts between these flows in practice are so regular, so rapid, so banal and momentary that they often become impossible to name as such.

Rather than conditions to be named or acted upon, these breaks and flows are often experienced in the moment as fleeting affects and frustrations (moments at an elevator door), in the midst of the rush of performative demands. It is important to consider the temporality of this experience in relation to claims for public programming narrated by Helguera, as a move from the 'spaces' of collective occupation and maintenance in the 1960s and 70s to the 'real estate of *time*' in our current moment. Where Helguera rightfully suggests public programming as an 'occupation' of time and one that instigates a movement towards the question of 'why', i.e. the urgent issues of the contemporary over the sustainability of the 'four walls of the gallery', the time of public programming cannot be thought of as more transgressive or experimental, or outside of the temporal tyranny that is always distracted and abstracted from life's time.<sup>194</sup> As we read in the introduction, Helguera's proposition is echoed by other informed attempts to narrate more dialogical and social formats in the arts, including the notion of 'durational aesthetics',<sup>195</sup> and the suggestion of a movement from questions of

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<sup>192</sup> For further discussion see: Kathi Weeks, *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries* (Duke University Press, 2011); Camille Barbagallo and Silvia Federici, 'Introduction,' *Care Work and the Commons*, Vol.15, *The Commoner* (2012), [https://www.academia.edu/4579405/Barbagallo\\_C.\\_and\\_Federici\\_S.\\_2012\\_Introduction\\_-\\_Care\\_Work\\_and\\_the\\_Commons](https://www.academia.edu/4579405/Barbagallo_C._and_Federici_S._2012_Introduction_-_Care_Work_and_the_Commons).

<sup>193</sup> See for example Gabriella Alberti, 'Transient Labour In London's Hotels: An Ethnography Of Migrants' Experiences At Work And Challenges For Union Organizing' (paper, *The Impact Of Migrant Workers On The Functioning Of Labour Markets And Industrial Relations*, ESRC Seminar Series, Women's Library, London Metropolitan University, London, July 15, 2011).

<sup>194</sup> Helguera, 'Alternative Audience and Instant Time: the Public Program as an Alternative Space,' 1-4.

<sup>195</sup> Adrian Heathfield, 'Durational Aesthetics,' *On the Temporal Dimension of Exhibiting*, eds. Beatrice von Bismarck et al. (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014).

public space to 'public' or 'cohabitational' time.<sup>196</sup> Here the 'durational' is seen as an alternative to spatial and representable forms that manifest in the 'enclosed' and abstracted spaces of spectacular exhibition formats and their entrapment of politics in a hierarchically delivered and consumable state of exception from the world. Discursive events engaging publics as a kind of alternative without delving into the various circumstances under which such events are produced, in many cases replicate these same problematics, of subjecting participants to short enclosures in time or of generalising what Hannah Arendt describes as the 'nowhere' of thought. In *The Life of the Mind*, Arendt asks the question 'Where are We When We Think?' and in so doing, she provokes a further question about the relationship between time and space in the act of thinking. For Arendt, this question is not easily resolved. In the first instance, she suggests, the *where* of thinking, is 'nowhere.'<sup>197</sup> It would appear that collective thought and thinking take place, as is argued by Helguera, in time over place. However, as Jeff Malpas adds, this nowhere of thought is, for Arendt, still very much located in a space-time; a moment in which one must attempt to navigate a location between the past and the future in the present or the 'presence of what is present.'<sup>198</sup> Here, the present is understood as located set of conditions in which a struggle is situated. This struggle between the past and the future is often curtailed in contemporary experiences of public programming, such that the 'nowhere' of the thinker is replicated in the absence of an articulated struggle with the conditions of the present.

As Franco Berardi suggests, time under current conditions has become 'de-personalised' and cannot be thought of as strictly one's own, nor as a space to inhabit the struggle between the past and the future:

*The atom of time of which Marx speaks is the minimal unit of productive labor. But in industrial production, abstract labor time was impersonated by a physical and juridical bearer, embodied in a worker in flesh and bone, with a certified and political identity. Naturally capital did not purchase a personal disposition, but the time for which the workers were its bearers. But if capital wanted to dispose of the necessary time for its*

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<sup>196</sup> Paul O'Neill and Claire Doherty, eds., *Locating the Producers - Durational Approaches to Public Art* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Valiz Antennae, 2011).

O'Neill, Paul. 'The Curatorial As Constellation: Durational Public Art, Cohabital Time and Attentiveness' (lecture, Critical Issues in Public Art, Public Art Norway, Oslo, Norway, January 6, 2014), <https://publicartnorway.org/aktuelt/critical-issues-in-public-art-presents-paul-oneill/>.

<sup>197</sup> Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 197.

<sup>198</sup> Jeff Malpas, "'Where are we when we think?': Hannah Arendt and the Place of Thinking," *Philosophy Today* (2015).

*valorization, it was indispensable to hire a human being, to buy all of its time, and therefore needed to face up to the material needs and trade union and political demands of which the human was a bearer. When we move into the sphere of info-labor there is no longer a need to have bought a person for eight hours a day indefinitely. Capital no longer recruits people, but buys packets of time, separated from their interchangeable and occasional bearers ...*<sup>199</sup>

In info-labour, concrete needs and demands on time cannot be articulated because:

*Depersonalized time has become the real agent of the process of valorization, and depersonalized time has no rights, nor any demands. It can only be either available or unavailable, but the alternative is purely theoretical because the physical body despite not being a legally recognized person still has to buy food and pay rent.*<sup>200</sup>

Where Berardi discusses this evacuation of the labouring body in relation to time, its implications for the relation between speech, thought and action are clear. As spheres of reference disappear and merge into labour, labour too loses its vital hinge to the realities and materialities of production — in other words, its conditions, because there is simply not time to deal with them. Of course, one must not over-state or over-generalise these positions. For many people, the body is very much at the centre of the process of labouring and is very much subjected to very strict disciplines of time. But, as labour is increasingly 'flexibilised', even the bodies of manual workers are atomised in time. It is not that we are rid of our corporal experience of labour, but rather that we are rid of our corporal rights as workers. This can be seen in the extreme, in the experiences of undocumented workers such as cleaners, who are regularly 'disposed of' via Home Office raids coordinated by worksite managers at moments when workforce reductions are deemed necessary and packages of time reduced. It is also evidenced in the hundreds of unregistered hours of individuals participating in the expanded field of public programmes, including web forums and chat rooms for the profit of major media corporations and indeed, in lesser numbers, to those who attend them in art galleries.

Berardi also suggests that our inability to inhabit life's time also makes the time of the past more compelling. Where the past could ignite and inform the present, in the endless production of depersonalised time, rather it becomes ossified and distracts from current conditions. Semio-capitalism, he suggests, draws its force from a life once lived in social movements, which fuel our engagements in the present. Referring to the practices of the Futurists and Dadaists, he recounts the importance of language in twentieth-century resistance

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<sup>199</sup> Berardi, *Precarious Rhapsody*, 33.

<sup>200</sup> *ibid.*

as a 'main site of social confrontation' that has now been subsumed and re-figured as a compulsion towards linguistic expansion and experimentation.<sup>201</sup> Engagements with the past, in the form of social movements or linguistic confrontation here, become thematised and re-partitioned: from the shared or public time of an epoch, into the micro-moments of labour time, in which such past moments fuel production but not the struggle between past and future that, for Arendt, is that which constitutes thinking.

With a set of conditions that make it increasingly impossible to think, the temporal rhetoric of urgency that is invoked in the discourse of public programming, raises a further question about the tension between the injunction to meaningful political action that is implicit in that rhetoric of urgency, and the foreclosure of such action that is an effect of the separation of the platform from any conversation about collective political action in the present. How might a sustained and committed contemplation on the conditions of the present, allow us to rethink the conditions of possibility for responding to urgent political issues in meaningful ways that are not delimited by the separation that underpins much public programming?

As set out in the last chapter, the turn to urgent themes and questions in public programming — whether they be juridical, political or artistic in nature — does not necessitate that they be negotiated as a struggle in the present. I have also shown how Pablo Helguera has described the finite temporality of public programmes as a way to re-imagine and renew the radical possibilities of experimental art. One of the problems with this approach is that it ignores the ways in which time, under neoliberal capitalism, has become packaged and depersonalised. Under the intensely precarious conditions of our neoliberal times, when there is scarce time for thinking about anything beyond the immediate material needs of one's subsistence, the question of time might be better understood as a deep and committed contemplation on the conditions of the present. Such an approach not only enables the passage from past to future that Arendt sees as the precondition for thinking, it also helps us to identify the beginnings of collective political action.

In Chapter 3, I will explore how a more nuanced and particular understanding of public programming, based in practices of thinking *with* conditions, might more specifically cultivate ways in which the 'real estate of time' might be occupied to engage in such a contemplation. Before doing so, however, I will elaborate how the fragmentation of time relates to over-

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<sup>201</sup> Berardi, *Precarious Rhapsody*, 19.

emphasis on the voice in the configuration of the virtuoso in current enactments of the public sphere.

## 2.6 A Voice and Something More

If the time of the virtuoso is fragmented, de-personalised and unable to inhabit the conditions of the present, its propellant — the voice — remains continuous. In both iterations of Rosler's performance and in the practices of public programming more generally the voice of discursive publicness, the voice that communicates, negotiates, networks, narrates, that, as described in the last chapter — dialogues, debates and speaks out to 'change AIDS politics forever' — is centred both within the governing forces of contemporary capital as well as calls for more emancipatory and democratic practices.

Even before Virno's suggestion that the foundations of the public sphere have been dissipated or Crouch's description of how democratic public institutions, like the public sphere, operate as a 'shell' within post-democracies, the notion of the public sphere as a site of communicative action that could at once supersede both self-interest and social hierarchy, had been criticised on a number of grounds. In relation to questions of class, it been argued that one could not avoid the material and social conditioning of voices that had to be accounted for in any discursive performance.<sup>202</sup> In related but different discussions, feminist critics have argued that the public sphere privileges practices of argumentation over questions of connection, and voice over other forms of communication, including gesture and silence.<sup>203</sup> Grant Kester, in his book on dialogical aesthetics, acknowledges these limits of the dominant public sphere in respect of class and gender, and argues for a more empathic, facial and corporal configuration. And yet, in doing so, he also draws on core elements from Habermas' conception. His approach to the public sphere rehearses a particular form of discursive autonomy presented by Habermas as a separation from more marketised forms of communication, in which the former might 'bracket' relations of power and hierarchy, particularly in the face of break-downs in political consensus. In his discussion of art works such as the Swiss collective Wochenclausen's boat trips, during which politicians, lawyers, drug users and activists toured together on Lake Zurich, for instance, he suggests that artistic interventions can secure this 'insulated space' of

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<sup>202</sup> Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Public Sphere And Experience: Toward An Analysis Of The Bourgeois And Proletarian Public Sphere*, trans. Peter Labanyi, Jamie Owen Daniel and Assebj Oksiloff (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

<sup>203</sup> Nancy Fraser, 'Rethinking The Public Sphere: A Contribution To The Critique Of Actually Existing Democracy,' *Social Text*, 25/26 (1990): 56–80.

the public sphere, by presenting 'maxims of conduct' that mediate a provisional understanding between factions on either side of a conflict. Though Kester is careful to situate Habermas' notion of the public sphere within a broader analytic system that is inclusive of less vocal forms of discourse such as the Levinasian notion of 'responsibility' and observant of feminist critique, he nonetheless suggests that the practices of learning to speak, to form arguments and to debate in public, offer a pedagogy of engagement necessary for participation in public life.<sup>204</sup>

Nick Couldry, in his 2010 book titled *Why Voice Matters*, also suggests the importance of voice in relation to our current moment of crisis; a moment in which to evoke a post-neoliberal politics. Where Virno offers little more than a passing reference to what a counter or post-neoliberal politics might look like, Couldry posits a new conception of 'voice' as a force of counter-rationality against the 'social production of distance'. For Couldry, voice cuts across the Aristotilean *phonē* (sounds, sensations) and *logos* (the intelligible voice, the voice of politics), because, in his words, 'neoliberalism' has eroded the 'beneath' that underpins political speech' and hence the foundation for this dichotomy.<sup>205</sup>

While Couldry is also critical of the Habermasian configuration of the public sphere, he nonetheless suggests the voice might be used against the market rationality of neoliberalism as a quality or attribute that supersedes political formulations like democracy in so far as the 'articulating voice' is 'an inescapable aspect of human experience' that 'challenges the neoliberal framework of market domination.'<sup>206</sup>

Noting the deterioration of the voice under neoliberalism described by Virno, he moves beyond the notion of the voice as simply that of a speaking subject and towards Judith Butler's idea of 'giving an account of oneself and the immediate conditions for doing so,'<sup>207</sup> suggesting that the voice be understood as both a process and a value that should be placed at the centre of organising social life against neoliberalism.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Kester, *Conversation Pieces, Community and Communication in Modern Art*, 108-111.

<sup>205</sup> Zygmunt Bauman quoted in Nick Couldry, *Why Voice Matters* (London: SAGE, 2010), 12.

<sup>206</sup> *ibid.*, 14.

<sup>207</sup> quoted in Couldry, *Why Voice Matters*, 7 but formulated by Butler in Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005)

<sup>208</sup> Couldry, *Why Voice Matters*, 2

Couldry goes some way towards outlining a politics of the voice that also addresses some of the problems with the public sphere — by interrogating the elevation of the speaking subject over questions of ‘private pain’, through attributing affect to his notion of voice and by suggesting that voice is a process and not only the act of the speaking subject. Yet Couldry also sets up his own dichotomy between voice and the market, when he distinguishes the voice that ‘account[s] for oneself and one’s immediate conditions’ from the voice devalued by neoliberal capitalism; a system that, in his words, ‘offers voice — having no choice but to do so — yet retracts it as a reality’.<sup>209</sup> Though his expansion of the notion of voice is useful, Couldry seems to miss the larger context of the voice in neoliberalism outlined in the many iterations of the platform. That is, in incorporating the voice not only because there is ‘no choice but to do so’, as in earlier stages of neoliberalism, when worker antagonism was, for example, incorporated into production, but in so far as voicing is a form of embodied value in and of itself. As shown in the examples discussed in the last chapter, it is precisely through the manipulation of voices that neoliberalism extracts value, by cultivating the separation between what is spoken and what can be acted upon in order to ensure that production can continue unmitigated. This value is produced most obviously in the industries dedicated to voice — be they mediatic, punitive, charitable, cultural or educational — in which the capacity for people to ‘give their voice’ is the defining force of their labour and subsequent profit. But it is also produced in the ancillary practices that surround them and that ensure that this call to voice does not result in antagonistic action. Examples, such as the court of the street or the ‘maxims of conduct’ introduced to students of debate, or the endless thematic production of public programming, each demonstrate the practices in place to ensure voices remain in the service of market and value production. In so far as value production is embodied both by workers and their networks, the voice cannot be abstracted, bracketed or insulated from market.

Couldry rightly acknowledges that out that the solution of a post neo-liberal politics is not to have ‘more voice’,<sup>210</sup> but rather a kind of voice he describes, following the sound theorist and phenomenologist Don Ihde, as ‘polyphony’; a process Ihde describes as ‘thinking’ through exchanges ‘between embodied subjects.’<sup>211</sup> Here, surpassing Habermas’ suggestion of

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<sup>209</sup> *ibid.*, 50.

<sup>210</sup> *ibid.*, 74.

<sup>211</sup> Don Ihde *Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound, Second Edition*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007 117

democracy as the process of communicative action, Couldry rather equates 'voice' with Dewey's more reflexive notion of a democracy underpinned by social cooperation.<sup>212</sup> However, instead of embracing the more open context of polyphony as a multi-faceted process of collective 'thinking' suggested by Ihde, he interprets the polyphony of social cooperation in relation to the voice and narration. While narration or 'giving an account of oneself',<sup>213</sup> is an important aspect of this process of thinking, as we will read in Chapter 3, so are processes of organised listening, of remaining silent, of organising the before and afters of narrative encounters, of commitment and discipline to connecting what is spoken and heard to what is acted upon, the work one undertakes to prepare to share once voice and the difficulties, impossibilities and euphorias of doing so.

Returning to Rosler's movement from *Semiotics* to *Audition*, one might remember that her re-enactment draws attention to both the speaking dimension of post-Fordist labour and its consequences for practices of listening and organisation. Titled *An Audition*, she draws attention to both the original meaning of the word in the sixteenth century — from the stem of *audire*, to hear — simply referred to the 'power of hearing' and its transition to the act of being granted a *hearing* in the court of the monarchy and later the court of law, to the nineteenth century when it refers more to a 'trial' for a performer and, in the twentieth century, again as a verb, *to audition*. Rosler's re-enactment highlights this ambiguity between the power of the act of speaking and the hierarchies that shape what is heard, and what can and cannot be acted upon. This neglect of questions of listening — its hierarchies and possibilities — is perhaps something that is not only characteristic of post-Fordism but exists *a priori* in the histories of militancy from which notions of the voice of politics and a political kind of speech draw their force. Who, for example, hears the interventions provided by public programming? Who and how is what is heard acted upon? Where is that accounted for and by whom?

It is precisely in the failure of listening in neo-liberalism — of refusing to both hear and act upon — that so many neoliberal apparatuses are able to cultivate the endless need for voicing.

Couldry's account here reduces the scope of the polyphonic offered by Ihde in his suggestion that '... a starting point for a post neo-liberal politics' is to insist that 'no form of social or economic organisation on any scale ... have legitimacy if it prioritises other values over the

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<sup>212</sup> *ibid.*, 135.

<sup>213</sup> *ibid.*, page no.

value of voice'.<sup>214</sup> This statement not only leaves out the complexity of both the voicing/ listening dynamic, but also the movements between communicative action and other kinds of actions — bodily, affective, organisational, strategic, silent. Where in other places he ascribes these attributes to this over-arching context of voice, it is unclear how they are connected in the everyday or even politically oriented use of voice as process. The book openly acknowledges that it stops short of offering suggestions related to, for example, 'the extremely difficult question of whether implementing the value of voice requires some specific transformation of contemporary institutions'.<sup>215</sup> Yet this gesture of critical humility fails to address the ways in which the critical voice can be framed and commodified by the platform culture of neoliberalism just as it can be used as technique for political organising. To put it simply, there is no necessary relationship between the voice and what Couldry calls a post-neoliberal politics.

My point here is not to dismiss the importance of the voice as Couldry describes it or to undervalue attempts at overcoming the sheer and utter crisis of communication, life and democracy that neoliberal capitalism regularly foists upon us. It is clear from the uprisings of the last decade — from Zuccotti Park to Tahir Square, to the 15M movement in Spain — that narration, collective speaking and listening in public, speaking out against the tragedy and violence of life under neoliberalism, is a crucial stage in political organising, just as it was, though differently configured, for Tim McCaskill and activists of ACT UP so many years ago. Rather, I would like to suggest that, at a fundamental level, to address the dramatic separations we experience between communicative faculties and our capacity to act critically in the world, we must think specifically and attend carefully to the work of organising, and the very labour of connecting words to actions and platforms to their consequences. In the attempt to reimagine public programming as a progressive social practice that forms one of the central concerns of this thesis, I would thus extend Dewey's injunction for a democracy based in social cooperation and Ihde's call for thinking as polyphony beyond the narrow focus on the production of voice, as suggested by Couldry. Instead, I propose a re-framing of these two injunctions in a more inclusive and radical re-composition of the deciding groups: those groups who come together to think together, to think about their conditions, to speak about their conditions, to change those conditions, and to produce new words and worlds based on their findings. In this process, which will be outlined in later chapters through the notion of thinking with conditions,

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<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

the voice is understood as one amongst many objects, artefacts, processes and practices of transformation.

## 2.7 Publicness and the 'Expanded Private Sphere'

In the face of the collapse of the public sphere described by Virno and in the context of democracy that, as Colin Crouch, Wolfgang Streeck and others have asserted more recently, is no longer compatible with capitalism, how do we cope with a scenario that 'continues to have and to use all the institutions of democracy, but in which they have increasingly become a formal shell?'<sup>216</sup> Equally, how do we wrench the 'energy and innovative drive of democratic practices' away from the 'small circles of a politico-economic elite' that they currently support?<sup>217</sup>

One possible answer to such questions can be found in discussions of the private sphere, care and social reproduction. The question of the private sphere rarely emerges in the context of public programming, except in thematics like 'art and food' or consumable content on questions of commoning, women's movements, and social reproduction. In light of this lacuna in discourses of public programming, Rosler's insistence on the presence of the domestic and the question of care amidst the gaze of the cameras, spectators and the apparatus of the audition, might give some indications of another way to consider these questions beyond the virtuosic.

In the world described by Virno, it is clear that this cannot take place through a return to the private sphere as such. As described above, there has been an erosion of such binaries, so that the distinctions between the so-called private and the so-called public have become irreducibly entangled within the field of 'labour. The affects of the 'private,' insecurity, and precarity are mobilised to propel a frenzy of idle talk that fuels semio-capital. Attributes that may have once been attributed to the private work of domestic or community care and the reproduction of life, are now both vital to labour in its communicative form, but also the vectors upon which active processes of marketisation and financialisation take place. In this context, what we formerly understood to be private cannot be understood as a separate sphere, nor can it offer the insulated comforts of home. However, if we start from the processes nurtured in

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<sup>216</sup> Streeck, 'The Crises Of Democratic Capitalism,' 5-29.

<sup>217</sup> Colin Crouch, *Making Capitalism Fit for Society* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013).

the private sphere, we can begin to see how practices of care and reproduction present a problem to normative ideas of post-Fordist labour that valorise the virtuosic and the performative over questions of care, support and survival of what is common. What indications of how to re-imagine public programming might one draw from the attributes of the private for re-thinking our own mechanisms of survival within and beyond capital?

As Isabell Lorey suggests, Virno has little to say on this point.<sup>218</sup> In basing his analysis on the tripartite foundation of action, intellect and labour, he reiterates the gendered and problematic notion that questions concerning 'the maintenance of life' sit outside of the sphere of action or the realm of freedom that can be achieved by men.<sup>219</sup> Re-reading Arendt's writing on freedom, Lorey suggests, however, that the defining feature of the virtuoso is not or not only their communicative performativity, but also their sociality. Freedom cannot be achieved, suggests Arendt, through the performances of the competitive and individuated virtuoso of our present, but through their capacity to act with others.<sup>220</sup> This detachment of freedom from choice and will to the freedom of 'acting together' opens the possibility of a politics that is based not on the individuated figure of the speaking subject but in the collective 'logics of care'.<sup>221</sup> In the context of a neoliberal economy in which we can no longer identify the space of the 'private' but for the lower wages, gendered divisions and genealogical conditions that continue to be exercised upon its attributes, attention to the logics of care within social reproduction can certainly help to address the persistence of gendered inequalities within a field of labour that continues to valorise the wage. What is more, such a focus could also empower deciding groups that enable the practices of reproduction to take a more primary position in relation to the field of political action.<sup>222</sup> Lorey argues, through a discussion of the work of the Madrid-based group 'las Precarias a la Deriva', that a focus on care both valorises the work of care differently, dealing with gendered inequalities that lie at the foundation of an economy that values the vocal and individualised, sovereign' virtuosic worker over the virtuoso who finds their freedom in 'acting together'. She also suggests that to occupy the logics of care and the crisis within it — those vectors that intersect and disrupt the flows of sociality, of horizontal

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<sup>218</sup> See: Lorey, *State Of Insecurity: Government Of The Precarious*.

<sup>219</sup> *ibid.*, 78-79.

<sup>220</sup> *ibid.*, 86-87.

<sup>221</sup> *ibid.*, 87.

<sup>222</sup> *ibid.*, 95.

existence, de-stabilising lives and orienting the social to the logic of value — is to inhabit the fuel of semio-capital. This approach entails collectively occupying and working through the anxiety and fear that mobilises the frenzy of idle talk and de-links, speaking and thinking together from the ability to negotiate a common life and future. By doing so, Lorey suggests that we might also begin to negotiate and thereby imagine a collective political future that is not subordinated to the demands of neoliberalism.

Lorey's suggestion of a politics based in care, moves away from the notions of dialogue, debate and speaking out, and towards a more intimate public politics of the domestic. Her approach has important implications for the rethinking of public programming at stake in this thesis because through them we can move beyond questions of celebration / mourning *vis-a-vis* the public sphere and towards a 'negotiation of common affairs' constituted on other grounds. For public programming, this would be in many ways a direct reversal of the current *modus operandi*, which actively obscures conditions of care, affect and intimacy. As Angela Mitropoulos suggests, 'a politics of the household turns on that most materialist of propositions: we are how we live'.<sup>223</sup> For Mitropoulos, Arendt's distinction between *oikos* and *polis* has never been as stable as it is when Virno claims to rethink it. Quoting Arendt, Mitropoulos suggests that 'the contradiction between the private and public ... has been a temporary phenomenon', and argues equally that the history of the performative in its connections to labour should be contextualised as part of a longer history of contractual and organisational relations around the domestic that she describes as 'oikonomia'.<sup>224</sup> As she suggests, the household, precisely in its gendering and allocation of divisions of labour, has played a strong political role, in, for example, the project of the frontier and American imperialism, where the legal form of value was defined and imposed through distinctions of legitimate labour, i.e. wage labour, slavery and authorised reproduction, situating, 'the household as the intimate sphere of a sentimental and self-managed equivalence.'<sup>225</sup> Even prior to the neoliberal erosion of the division between the spheres of intellect, labour and action, these 'contracts' between the household and more seemingly public aspects of life were, in regular negotiation, proliferating limits and upholding the genealogical order of an *oikonomia*. For Mitropoulos, the relation between public and private is not then a binary, nor is

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<sup>223</sup> Mitropoulos, *Contract & Contagion*, 18.

<sup>224</sup> *ibid.*, 40.

<sup>225</sup> *ibid.*, 103.

it a dialectic between 'captured' entities and non-alienated essences. Rather, it is 'the unreliable entanglement of contracts and contagions.'<sup>226</sup>

It is from this position that Mitropoulos echoes Lorey in suggesting that Arendt refuses the notion of politics that is based in the subject — their vocality or their ability to communicate in the so-called public sphere - and rather suggests a political framework that is based on the infra, 'the unassimilable plurality of that which lies between.'<sup>227</sup> The operative form of the infra, the infrastructure, is where 'the underlying rules of the world can be clasped in the space of everyday life.'<sup>228</sup> To attend to the infrastructure is not identify one aspect of life or political practice as the 'centre,' as Couldry suggests of the voice, but to examine from precisely the 'movement and relation' of formations like the platform, the network and the organisation, as they 'take form'. It is also, in this same moment, to attend to the 'process by which affinities take shape, or not.'<sup>229</sup>

These two propositions — one for a notion of politics that emerges in and through logics of care, and the other, for the thinking through of infrastructures as the process of taking form, have important implications for the radical rethinking of public programming with which this thesis is concerned. Specifically, they provide an expanded possibility for attending to the less obvious moments of publicness that accompany programming practices. They also provide a more complex and less heroic set of circumstances from which to imagine how public programmes might rather be used as care-based logistics and infrastructures in which to practice the 'processes through which affinities take shape or not'. It is in this context that we might ask of public programmes, 'What forms of attachment, interdependency, and indebtedness are being implemented, funded, obliged or simply and violently enforced; and what tender possibilities are foreclosed?'<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> *ibid.*, 18.

<sup>227</sup> *ibid.*, 114.

<sup>228</sup> *ibid.*, Mitropoulos quotes Keller Easterling here suggesting that 'infrastructures are the overt point of contact and access, where the underlying rules of the world can be clasped in the space of everyday life.' Keller Easterling, *The Action is the Form: Victor Hugo's TED Talk* (Strelka Press, 2012).

<sup>229</sup> Mitropoulos, *Contract & Contagion*, 114.

<sup>230</sup> *ibid.*

The self-propriated entanglement of these approaches stand as alternatives to the characterisation of the private as somehow overtaken by the logic of capital that is present in Virno and the work of other key scholars on questions of public thought, such as that of Henry Giroux. Across a number of texts, Giroux's discussion of 'public pedagogy', annexes the private and suggests that the neo-liberal collapse of the public into the private' is to be contested for its 'rendering of all social problems as biographical in nature' and its privileging of 'emotion over reason'. The role of the intellectual in Giroux's argument is to counter the 'neo-liberal obsession with the private' that both 'furthers a market-based politics which reduces all relationships to the exchange of money and the accumulation of capital, but also depoliticizes politics itself and reduces public activity to the realm of utterly privatized practices and utopias, underscored by the reduction of citizenship to the act of buying and purchasing goods.'<sup>231</sup> Giroux's characterisation of the private as a site of extreme marketisation cannot be disputed. However, Lorey and Mitropoulos suggest that it is precisely for their existence on the fault lines of neoliberalism that the attributes of the private be inhabited, interrogated, collectivised and, indeed, turned against dominant forms of value production. Considered in relation to the terms of such debates, the 'really' at the elevator door can be read as being beyond a 'banal fact' of life in an art museum and as both an interference with a practice of care and infrastructure and as a force that shapes the relations of public programming. In this attention to care and infrastructure, the voice, dialogue and speaking out may have a role to play, but in focusing on the production and reproduction of life, we may begin to move away from the solutions of single subjects in negotiation and towards committed, collective, localised and affinity-based forms of publicity. These approaches might be more in keeping with Giroux's recent calls to the collective production of sanctuaries from the current 'democracy in exile', than a return to the public sphere in its moment of collapse could ever provide.<sup>232</sup>

The activation of the attributes of the private as a form of resistance are by no means new to the political landscape, even if they have been left out of most mainstream accounts. Susan Shall and Randy Stoecker, in the mid-1990s, suggested that the 'expanded private sphere' evoked by women of colour community organising groups in the United States offered something that a politics grounded in the dominant and masculinised notions of public sphere

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<sup>231</sup> Giroux, 'Cultural Studies, Public Pedagogy and the Responsibility of Intellectuals,' 59–79.

<sup>232</sup> Henry Giroux, 'Democracy in Exile and the Curse of Totalitarianism,' *eCounterpunch*, January 31, 2017, <http://www.counterpunch.org/2017/01/31/democracy-in-exile-and-the-curse-of-totalitarianism/>.

was unable to.<sup>233</sup> In reviewing five decades of 'women centred approaches' - which do not necessarily conform to biological or binary gender identifications - they suggest that there is a profound difference in community organising practices grounded within the image of the public sphere and those constructed in the image of an 'expanded private sphere'. Shall and Stoecker analyse the former through the community organising models offered by Saul Alinsky, which valorise speech, conducts and the performance of 'organic leaders' in the realm of public debate in a public sphere that is constituted by the competing interests of the 'have and have nots'. They analyse the latter through the practices of women of colour and low-income organisers who do not ascribe to models per se, but expand the boundaries of mothering and the private sphere, 'beyond the private sphere'.<sup>234</sup> They move beyond the confines of the genealogical or contractual relations of motherhood to create communities of care composed by 'other mothers' who collectivise, share and mutually valorise responsibilities of social reproduction, in turn making their networks more sustainable.

Where Alinsky's community organisers often worked away from and often at the cost of relations of care and domestic duties in their lives, and understood the neighbourhood as the space in which the public sphere might be enacted through competitive negotiations, the women centred model understands the neighbourhood as an extended private sphere in which acts of 'municipal housekeeping' serve to reclaim aspects of life from the vectors of control described earlier in this chapter. For example, Chicana women, in the neighbourhood of Pico Aliso in Los Angeles, recently described their own practices of 'municipal housekeeping' in delivering food to local drug dealers who, in turn, left the area, as an alternative to narratives of 'necessary policing' that real estate developers perpetuate in relation to street crime as a form of resistance to gentrification processes.<sup>235</sup>

Equally, as Stall and Stoecker point out, while Alinsky and other 'public sphere' focused models of community organising work to cultivate leaders as spokespeople in the movement towards achievable goals or 'wins', the women-centred model orients towards 'centre women' or

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<sup>233</sup> Susan Stall and Randy Stoecker, 'Community Organizing or Organizing Community? Gender and the Crafts of Empowerment,' *Gender and Society*, Vol. 12, No. 6, Special Issue: Gender and Social Movements, Part 1 (Dec, 1998): 729-756, Sage Publications, Inc.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, 730.

<sup>235</sup> 'The Women of Pico Aliso: 20 Years of Housing Activism,' *Boyle Heights Alliance Against Artwashing and Displacement*, Community Beacon, 2016. <http://alianzacontraartwashing.org/en/press/the-women-of-pico-aliso-20-years-of-housing-activism/>.

'bridge leaders', who use 'existing networks to develop social groups that generate community consciousness' and to create an ongoing context for engaging with social movements and issues as they arise.<sup>236</sup>

While presented in binary terms for effect, Stall and Stoecker are clear that there are ways in which these two models or praxes of community must necessarily combine as the effects of neo-liberalism intensify. Nonetheless, they make a strong case for the strength, duration and resistance demonstrated by political praxes that begin from the attributes of the expanded private sphere that is deeply attentive to the life conditions.

For public programming, as explored in the next chapter, attention to the attributes of the private sphere do not produce a form of value production that is exterior to labour, but dramatically shift both the orientation and modes of engagement towards questions of sustaining life over questions of sustaining the institutions and structure of culture in their current marketed forms.

## 2.8 From Thinking *without* to Thinking *with*

The critical discussions of the entanglement of the public and the private in the previous sections, may seem to have moved quite far from the anecdote of my friend at the elevator door. Yet when this anecdote is considered in relation to these discussions, we can see that the mis-understanding, marking the distance between what was said and what was meant, was based on a wider context of thinking *without* conditions: a context characterised by generalised separation, separations between words, their meanings and their contexts, and between a political kind of speech and a public sphere. As was dramatically presented in the last chapter, the dissipation of former and perhaps not so stable differences between the intellect, action and labour - and their subjection to the logic of value production under labour - generates platforms that proliferate separations between 'the people and the problem', between themes and actions, and between the subjects involved in political struggle. In this chapter, I have shown further how these forms of publicity, based in notions of the public sphere but articulated in its absence produce a frenzy of idle talk that do not allow the 'why' of public programming to register in time. We have also seen the degree to which questions of vocality, of the speaking subject, are central to neo-liberal paradigms both in their propulsion

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<sup>236</sup> Stall and Stoecker, 'Community Organizing or Organizing Community? Gender and the Crafts of Empowerment,' 740.

of virtuosic performances, but also in predominant narratives of resistance. Here the 'expanded private sphere' is offered as a shift from an emphasis on the speaking subject to practices of affinity grounded in the production and reproduction of life in its speaking and non-speaking characteristics.

Across the two chapters, this generalised language of separation has applied to a number of conditions, themselves skewing the practices of public programming toward principles attached to the public sphere, over questions of social reproduction. On a level of *naming conditions* or separating 'the people and the problem', it is clear that themes and terms are given more significant status than the worlds they inhabit. On the level of *acoustic conditions*, speaking voices are attributed more agency than practices of listening. In relation to *affective conditions*, questions of justice are attributed higher status than those of 'private pain'. In relation to *temporal conditions*, practices of collective thought in the present are not able to move fluidly between the past and the future, blocking what is and can be acted upon. Equally, the privileging of questions of performance over questions of organisation, effaces the *infrastructural conditions* that at once propel post-Fordist subjectivities and hold the key to unlocking other conditions of the possible inclusive of questions of care. By attending to these separations in the next chapters, I argue for processes of thinking with conditions.

Beyond the subject position of the scholar, the public intellectual or public pedagogy, thinking with conditions attends to the contradictions of neo-liberalism through the suturing work of the in between and the being with. Thinking with conditions does not offer an over-arching solution to the problems it identifies. Instead, it provides a set of processes through which this connecting work might take place, gleaned from listening in contexts where conditions might be confronted 'from below' and deciding groups might come together to produce terms, processes, communities of care, affinity and infrastructure through which to engage in action. Without this kind of thinking, which is very concretely linked to our current life worlds and to the conditions in which we inhabit them, we risk endless repetition of the crisis we are in: perpetual production of new propositions, perpetually disconnected from possible actions.

This may seem like a modest approach and does not provide for a more wholesale theory of change. Yet if public programmes are to be used to engage with the urgent questions of the contemporary with the effect of attending to them, they must provide spaces and context in which people can think closely with their conditions, on the scale of localities, around issues in work, around social reproduction and, indeed, on a more planetary level. Without such

sustained practices, it is unlikely that we will come to understand whether it is voice or direct action, or some other concept-practice that will enable meaningful movement around and against the violently guarded phantasms of neo-liberalism. My argument is, then, for a somewhat humbler and more grounded approach to the practice of existing neo-liberal paradigms, i.e. practiced re-formulations of life, from below, *before* the profession of solutions.

It is true that, from a certain perspective, whether we call these routes towards a post-neoliberal reality 'voice' or 'thinking with conditions' could be of little consequence. As I've argued thus far, it is precisely in the de-linking of such critical, even poetic words and concepts from critical actions that the current hollowing out of democratic forms take place. Conversely it is only through enacting such words and concepts as *praxes* that we are able to test their use and value to the conjugation of other, critical life worlds. Voice and speaking is very much a part of this process, but, as will be explored in the next chapters, it is not the only attribute of 'thinking with conditions'.

In the next section, I will argue for praxes of thinking with conditions that account for the many vocal and non-vocal, narrated and non-narrated expressions that are available to us. I will draw from specific genealogies in the fields of critical pedagogy and radical research, to outline processes that move through cycles of thought to analysis and action and are attentive to questions of care and infrastructure, which are also crucial to understanding conditions in their multiple manifestations. I will suggest processes that offer more specific routes out of current problem with platforms, addressing specific attributes of the manipulation of voice in neoliberalism. Returning to Ihde's wider discussion of polyphony as 'thinking', I will address, for example, dynamics of listening (perceptual, imaginative and otherwise) as equally important to those of voice and narration.

If we are to imagine the possibilities for intervention, for producing more efficacious forms of public speaking, thinking and doing together, it seems critical to not replicate the abstraction of context in our analysis of it. We need, in other words, to address how the separation of critical, political speaking from political actions resonates with particular groups and in particular fields of practice. How might we begin to think with the conditions they produce?

# INTERLUDE

# INTERLUDE

## Excursive Genealogies

When we examine what we should say when, what words we should use in what situations, we are looking again not *merely* at words (or 'meanings', whatever they may be) but also at the realities we use the words to talk about...  
J.L. Austin, *A Plea for Excuses*<sup>237</sup>

In Part I, I analysed the emergent field of public programming; its aims, desires and modes of setting up platforms that ostensibly respond to urgent social questions of the contemporary, in the name of promoting dialogue and debate in the public sphere. This analysis worked against the narration of public programming as a site in which an alternative political discussion can take place amidst the increasing incursion of private interests.

Through this analysis, I am not suggesting that public programmes be shut down nor am I foreclosing their potential for transformative social and political action. I am rather proposing closer attention to the practices through which such transformations could take place. In order to orientate public programming towards this transformative potential, I suggest that it is not enough to valorise universal or neutral attributes of the public sphere, or to chronically over-emphasise the 'voice' or the 'platform'. Rather it is necessary to align such attributes with often forgotten and under-valourised questions of what was once understood to be the 'private', or the domestic, to align collective speech and thought with the 'unglamorous tasks' of collective care, mutual aid and survival.<sup>238</sup> If the conditions of our current moment dissolve boundaries between the public and the private, between Thought, Labour and Action in order to propel capital, how can new alliances oriented around shared conditions support the production of new groups dedicated to resistance of shared conditions of precarity, fear and anxiety? How can such groups bring questions of collective language and thought production in closer proximity with questions of care? How can we move from the over-production of endless platforms to the generation of infrastructures that link language and life and post-capitalist realities?

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<sup>237</sup> J.L. Austin, 'A Plea for Excuses: The Presidential Address,' *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Vol. 57 (1956-57): 8.

<sup>238</sup> Sternfeld, 'Unglamorous Tasks: What Can Education Learn from its Political Traditions?'

In Part II, I attempt to answer these questions through what I describe as praxes of *thinking with conditions*. In Part I, we read of a context in which public programmes separate words and worlds; public speech from private pain; organisation from presentation; content from consequence and the temporalities of the past, present and future. What praxes of speaking and thinking together might provide avenues for bringing these separations back together?

A first postulate for thinking with conditions is, then, a call for a radical and politicised practice of suture, of bringing words and worlds into closer proximity. In Gayatri Spivak's writing on many years of practice with radical literacy work with subaltern groups she suggests that suturing is the apprentice work that is necessary to move beyond a humanities education that understands the right to speak and act in public from above. The practice of suture is, she argues, a 'transgressive ritual practice', that, like the movement of a hacker or a weaver, bridges the 'iterative text of doing', from below with those higher principles, often associated with the public sphere. To suture, she suggests, is to learn a 'response-ability', to work across difference, to suture the 'knowledges of humanities education' to 'the situations in which rights are not a framework at all', moving away from the notion that people or problems are the 'object of investigation for disciplinary information retrieval as such' and more sites of committed collective investigation. This in turn means moving away from the study of particular themes and urgencies that affect 'others', and towards practices of care, concern and 'mutual accountability' that emerge through working hard to 'change this state of affairs'.<sup>239</sup> As possible sites of *thinking with conditions*, public programmes might be offered to re-orient fixations with performative, public speech towards mutual 'detective work, fieldwork' at the intersections of the public and the private, the micro and the macro political. Such practices of collective learning might, Spivak suggests, produce the 'uncoercive re-arrangement of desires' necessary to produce other paradigms of political practice.<sup>240</sup>

### **Suturing as *Thinking with***

In Virno's attempt to hypothesise an alternative to publicness without a public sphere, he poses the question, '...is it possible today to split that which today is united, and unite what is

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<sup>239</sup> Spivak, 'Righting Wrongs,' 581.

<sup>240</sup> *ibid.*, 526.

divided, that is the General Intellect and Political Action’?<sup>241</sup> Such an alliance, in his assessment, might constitute a new publicity, consisting of acts of civil disobedience and defection.

In Part II of this thesis, I will argue that neither spatialised conceptions like ‘spheres’ or ‘realms’ of life, nor the adherence to prescribed or particular actions (i.e. voice, narration, defection) can hold in a situation in which such realms have collapsed. It is rather through the anti-thesis of *thinking without conditions*, that thinking *with*, suturing the aspirations of the public sphere with the concrete and committed re-making of life worlds, that we might find the potential of collective thinking and speaking in public again.

If the practice of *thinking without conditions* is derived from a generalised separation of thought and action that ‘hollows out’ the public sphere in support of post-Fordist values of labour, the notion of *thinking with*, implies a different kind of thinking altogether. Accepting Virno’s suggestion of uniting the Intellect and Action toward their emancipation from the capitalist labour process, I do not aim to suggest thinking or cognitive capitalism as the key to unlocking the potential of the General Intellect. Thinking, action, speaking and listening have in the radical education praxes I will describe, been united to critically re-formulate labour towards anti-oppressive, technologies for living. Such praxes have developed within the realm of radical and popular education to re-connect the generalised separations of our present, to produce new horizons of the possible. As Marx pointed out in the first volume of *Capital*, what precedes the characteristics of labour oriented towards the production of value for capital, is the labour whose relations and value are organized around particular questions of use. Thinking towards a labour of social and liberatory use is not utilitarian, and more what Hannah Arendt describes in the *Life of the Mind* as something akin to the ‘experience of being alive’. Thinking, as resisting, organising and practicing a life beyond neoliberal capitalism.<sup>242</sup>

In Part II of this thesis, I will present processes from which public programming might borrow to learn to speak and think *with* conditions. How do we arrive at terms and actions that reflect the complex and contradictory conditions of our inhabitation of neo-liberalism, conditions that precisely block this kind of thinking? How might words, rendered meaningless in a flurry of

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<sup>241</sup> Virno, ‘Publicness of the Intellect. Non-State Public Sphere and the Multitude,’ 68.

<sup>242</sup> Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 78-79.

political sounding chatter, come to find a more proximate relation to the conditions we would like to name and indeed those we would like to change?

As described in the Introduction to the thesis, radical education praxes come under many headings, and though *excursive*, wandering through eras and geographies, share a desire to link thinking with projects of social struggle, and language with concrete, liberatory changes in the life-worlds of their practitioners and participants.

It is not by accident that many of such processes situate themselves exactly in the relationship between thought, action, language and labour. They also locate themselves in direct contestation of practices of normative literacy and rote education that promote a separation between the language and modes of collective thinking and the social conditions they reflect. Such pedagogies are against routine exercises of memorization and testing, against dissociated performances such as the mock debate, or the negotiator who is taught to separate 'the people from the problem', or in producing plans from above, and rather find their point of departure in the naming and acting upon social contradiction, inequity and injustice. Important to Virno's suggestion of labour's centrality in current modes of subjectivation, such pedagogies are also focused on the re-orientation of work towards liberatory, non-coercive lives.

In her essays *Common Notions I and II*, Marta Malo de Molina plots a number of the genealogies that I have mentioned, with particular reference to worker's inquiry, feminist consciousness raising, Institutional Analysis, Participatory Action-Research and Militant Research. Malo de Molina suggests that such projects emerge from a common need for self-organised groups to produce their own processes of knowledge production that ignore distinctions between theory and practice and are based on what is useful in the project of social transformation. They at once 'create an appropriate and operative theoretical horizon,' and exist 'very close to the surface of the lived,' where they might stretch at once what is thinkable and what can be acted upon.<sup>243</sup>

While based primarily on historical examples, Malo de Molina argues that these genealogies form a significant counter-practice to the cultivation of neoliberal subjectivities, from which we

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<sup>243</sup> Malo de Molina, 'Common Notions, Part 1: Workers-inquiry, Co-research, Consciousness-raising.'

need to re-appropriate our 'intellectual and mental capacities.'<sup>244</sup> In the genealogies of radical pedagogy she describes, there lies not only a practice but a discipline of speaking and thinking together that is oriented around conditions and towards social transformation. A central pre-occupations of these 'common notions' is to literally produce an 'other way of thinking.'<sup>245</sup>

Where Mola de Molina's engagement with these concepts emerges through her association with groups engaged in the Spanish context where autonomous and self-organised knowledge production are arguably more prevalent than in the anglo-European context, I have made use of these genealogies in the much more fraught terrain of neoliberal cultural institutions. My own introduction to radical pedagogies of this kind extends to the North American context at a moment in the 1990s when exiled activists from Latin America brought popular education techniques to the fight against neoliberal policies like the North America Free Trade Agreement and through which community organisers including cultural workers, became involved in developing public programmes in trade unions, grassroots community spaces, and, to a more limited extent, in museums and galleries. In Chapter 3 I look at the workbooks developed at this convergence, alongside writing by Paulo Freire and the contemporary use of popular education by the sound collective Ultra-red, members of which were trained precisely through the convergence of popular educators and organisers from North America and the global south. I argue for the use of these genealogies within the context of public programming in and beyond arts institutions. I suggest that the use of the practices that exist within them can be used to dramatically re-shape why, how and by whom public programmes are used.

The second genealogy, to be explored in Chapter 4, draws on the Ecole Moderne network generated by Elise and Celestin Freinet in France in the 1930s, and, by extension, Institutional Pedagogy, a concept and practice outlined by Fernand Oury, Aida Vasquez and others in France in the 1950s and 60s. I am drawn to theories and practices of Institutional Pedagogy in particular as they address the conflicts, both hidden and articulated - associated with drawing resources from existing institutions while at the same time attempting to move beyond them,

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<sup>244</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>245</sup> Rick Arnold, Deborah Barndt and Bev Burke, *A New Weave: Popular Education in Canada and Central America* (Toronto: CUSO/Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1986), 3.

to create infrastructures and exoskeletons that exceed them, while not ignoring the conditions they produce, and the subjects they condition.<sup>246</sup>

Within these genealogies the chapters outline a very specific form of thinking that allows at once for individual and collective thought; a modality that connects language to particular 'deciding groups' through affinity in struggle; that foregrounds questions of intention, commitment and accountability; that convenes the affects and micropolitical aspects of thinking together with what is thought and spoken about; that is connected to its historical moment; that is accountable in its organisation and consequences in attempting to articulate post-capitalist life practices and infrastructures; and finally, that both 'oppose and propose'<sup>247</sup>, 'denounce' and 'announce', as Paulo Freire puts it.<sup>248</sup>

I engage with them here for their capacities to suggest other ways of suturing the attributes of the so-called 'public'- dialogue, collective speaking, listening, the production of urgent themes and terms - to questions of care, community organisation and the social re-production of life. I suggest that they are not only relevant to those engaged in public programming and informal education work, but have much broader implications for the context of social struggle. In these contexts, questions of pedagogy, care, affect and collective language and thought production are also often over-looked or relegated to the sidelines, as feminised and inconsequential to the main practices of spectacular, voice and performance-oriented politics. My hope here is to explore praxes of *thinking with conditions* as alternative articulations of thinking through the conjunction of politics, aesthetics, cultural production and care that are at the heart of the struggle against the separations of neo-liberal capitalism.

Like others within movements of progressive adult education, protagonists within both of these genealogies worked against both capitalist and colonial forms of governance *and* the more dogmatic approaches of the metropolitan left, including top down approaches of Parties and

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<sup>246</sup> The term 'exoskeleton' is used by the researcher and curator Jesus Carrillo at a convergence curated by myself, Valeria Graziano and Susan Kelly in July 2017 at Nottingham Contemporary, titled Public Programming and Social Movements. This quote is taken from the author's notes of that event.

<sup>247</sup> The movement between opposition and proposition is articulated by Freire in Chapter 4 of the Pedagogy of the Oppressed. See Paulo Freire, 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed: Chapter 4,' *History is a Weapon*, accessed September 18, 2017, <http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon2/pedagogy/pedagogychapter4.html>.

<sup>248</sup> Paulo Freire, *Teachers As Cultural Workers: Letters To Those Who Dare To Teach* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), 42.

trade unions. As such, they are doubly marginalized: on the one hand under threat of closure from mainstream university departments or extension programmes from which they may have drawn funds, and on the other, controversial in not aligning with party narratives and centralised control. Given the paucity of material on their implementation and the eras in which these genealogies were written, narrations of radical education often conform to more conventional modes of history telling. They are often overly focused on individual (mostly male) authors, and do not always highlight the detail of the work nor the politics of social reproduction within them. This means reading them against the grain of their historical narrations, in keeping with the 'detective work'<sup>249</sup> described by Spivak but also reading key texts of these movements alongside the pamphlets, workbooks and other materials that represent the perspectives of practitioners.

How might the praxes exposed by such genealogies help us to uncover the specific values and interests that are behind performances of pretending in public programming? How might they support us in understanding what actions might be taken to intervene, to turn the mirage-like effects of separation, into actions that are true to their word? These genealogies also offer a counter-point to Virno's very brief propositions of specific sets of actions (direct action, defection etc), toward a public pedagogy that re-constitutes the field of public programming as a set of situated and consistent practices explicitly dedicated to dismantling the exploitative apparatus of production we currently occupy. From the precarity and collapse of conditions for speaking, listening and acting together under neo-liberalism, this is a move towards thoughts, actions and notions of work that locate their horizons within the contours of situated struggles and their desires well beyond them.

### **On Conditions**

Practitioners of these genealogies, as I will describe, articulate a multi-fold definition of conditions. Drawing from its 12th century iteration of the term in *condicere*, that is 'speaking and talking together', conditions can be understood as modes of becoming, enacted through the context of collective speech, linking speaking with the production and re-production, the 'conditioning' of life forms. Equally, they address the 15th century meaning as a 'situation, context or mode of being', that is condition as the set of circumstances we find ourselves in, conditions that we may examine abstractly, but are also immersed within. Finally, they address

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<sup>249</sup> Spivak, 'Righting Wrongs,' 581.

the more recent articulation of conditions as active orientations towards the future, 'to bring a desired condition', or to 'condition'.<sup>250</sup> Such conditions of futurity— as suggested within the both context of popular education and of Institutional Pedagogy, must be understood dialectically, as producing the greatest possibility for emancipation simultaneously with the greatest danger of reproducing oppressive tendencies.

In the genealogies that I will describe in this section, conditions are also understood as plural and contingent as, in the words of Hannah Arendt, 'whatever touches or enters into a sustained relationship with human life immediately assumes the character of a condition...'<sup>251</sup> They are also addressed directly to the field of struggles over what constitutes contemporary labour for which the question of conditions has been a central mobilising term. In a collection from a 1967 issue of the journal *Partisans*, editor Emile Copferman suggests '...we spend the majority of our existence working. It is through work that capitalist society perpetuates itself. School education, the family, work are all an entrance into the weary work of the apparatus of production...'<sup>252</sup>. The question of radical pedagogy must then directly intervene into what he describes as the 'conditioning' of labour, not only in places and practices of work but in the labour of building new life worlds.

In thinking with the conditions of public programming, separations appeared in relation to a number of specific conditions: *naming conditions*, separations between themes and terms and the worlds they inhabit, between 'the people and the problem'; *acoustic conditions*, separations between the agency of speaking voices and the ways in which practices of listening have been organised; *affective conditions*, separations between notions of 'justice and private pain'; *temporal conditions* that is the ability to move fluidly between the present, the past and the future, between the subjects of collective thought and what is and what can be acted upon. Finally, the privileging of questions of performance over questions of organisation, effaces the *infrastructural conditions* that at once propel post-Fordist subjectivities and hold the key to unlocking other conditions of the possible. In Chapter 3 these conditions will be read explicitly through the genealogy of popular education, to suggest the conceptual terrain of

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<sup>250</sup> 'Condition,' Online Etymology Dictionary, <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=condition>.

<sup>251</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 9.

<sup>252</sup> Emile Copfermann, 'Pedagogie: Education Ou Mise En Condition?' *Partisans* (1967), Petite Collection Maspero. Author's translation.

another kind of publicity that might underpin public programming. In Chapter 4 they will be read more implicitly, in their relationship to practices of instituting and navigating existing modes of institutional enunciation.

### **Thinking With Conditions in Public Programming**

In the chapters that follow, I will work through case studies of attempts to intervene into the dynamics and practices of public programming through taking up the possibilities made available by the conceptual tools of radical pedagogy.

In relation to the genealogy of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* presented in Chapter 3, I will look at emancipatory education's interest in conscious, collective practices of thinking together and work through the case of an engagement developed between the sound art collective Ultra-red and a group of anti-racism organisers in England's southwest. This work was instigated as part of a public programming curatorial residency that I held at the Plymouth Arts Centre in 2007. Through this programme, which began over three months and extended into several years work, groups produced terms and actions related to struggles against racism. Together they created 'new terms' but also other formats for engaging in the struggle, particularly by attending to the existential conditions in which such naming took place, to the acoustic dimensions of speaking and listening, to the temporal conditions of past and future anti-racism action and to the production of new infrastructures around mutual aid and mutual care. In doing so, the aim of public programmers to respond to urgent themes and terms, was reached through years of committed and grounded work of radical pedagogy.

In Chapter 4 I will look at the second genealogy, related to Institutional Pedagogy and its particular focus on widening the institutional context in which both 'speaking' and 'public' are positioned in public programming. I will draw from experiences of field work that I developed as the curator/founder of the Centre for Possible Studies in London's Edgware Road neighbourhood. In that context, myself and collaborators used the opportunity of a public programme within a mainstream art gallery to develop experiments that would contribute to social struggles within and outside of the gallery context.

Before moving on to these chapters, I insert some small caveats. The first is that there is not scope within them to elaborate every aspect of the genealogies that I have mentioned above

in all of their detail. Nor, to go beyond this into the wider field of radical education histories to which this project is deeply indebted, and on which I intend to dedicate much of my future research. Instead, I focus tightly here on how these two genealogies might be useful in suturing the separations that I have described within public programming, to suggest how a different understanding of the 'public' leads to possibilities beyond the notion of the public sphere and towards thinking with conditions.

The second caveat, is that there is a price to be paid for disaggregating case studies from the deeply situated political and social contexts in which they have emerged - particularly as an advocate thinking with conditions. Each could easily on their own be the subject of a doctoral dissertation and have, for me, been the sites of complex and long term— in some cases decades – of committed work. I present them here to indicate how the genealogies of radical education are made relevant in response to a range of conditions with which the specific practice of contemporary public programming interfaces. My relationship to these cases and the complex issues that surround them are neither fleeting nor touristic, but have been deep and enduring. I read them here in this way to step out of my daily immersions, to develop a transversal analysis across a number of public programming apparatus and to indicate both the pervasiveness of broad and de-politicising tendencies of thinking without conditions and the range of possibilities that might be available to exit them.

Part II

Thinking with  
Conditions

## CHAPTER 3

### The World and the Word Together: Genealogies of Popular Education

"And yet this is what we must seek, a reconciliation between reality and men, between description and explanation, between object and knowledge"  
Roland Barthes<sup>253</sup>

*It is early afternoon, a Saturday in May. A group has assembled at an art gallery in the city of Plymouth, as part of its public programme. The group is there to discuss racism in the rural southwest of the United Kingdom. Facilitated by members of the sound art collective, Ultra-red, the meeting has been termed an 'Encuentro', the term used by the Zapatista movement to describe initial encounters through which people with interests in an issue come together to analyse a problem and set the direction for future discussion and action. Influenced by histories of popular education in Latin America, Ultra-red's use of the encuentro is to determine whether there are grounds for continued work what they describe as a 'militant sound investigation.'*

*The group is responding to the question: 'what is the sound of racism in England's Southwest?' The question has been determined through a month of discussions over tea in the homes of users of a prominent charity, an anti-racism organisation that has operated in the UK since the late 1970s. The question has convened a group of people strange to each other - some of whom have experienced racist violence, some belonging to artists's groups, some from local support organisations.*

*After helping themselves to tea and samosas, and settling children into the crèche that has been set up for the event, the group sits in a circle. Among them are gallery curators, Don from Veggie House, who has supplied the food for the event, and his son Kaz, Peshrow, a Kurdish Iraqi activist, Betts, a local race and equity officer, Shadya, a women's support worker from a city two hours away, Ali, a local taxi driver and Matteo and Madelena who represent their family, who work in a service station in a neighbouring town.*

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<sup>253</sup> Roland Barthes, 'Myth Today,' in *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 23.

*A microphone with a yellow fluorescent cord rests on a chair. It is attached to small mobile amplification unit that some laugh at, saying it resembles a Hoover. Rising from the floor is a flip chart open to a blank page.*

*The meeting convenes. 'Welcome,' says the facilitator. 'We have gathered today to discuss the question, what is the sound of racism in England's southwest? What are the terms we associate with racism and how might we move towards the practice of anti-racism?'*

*The conversation explodes into many stories of experiences of racism: at the hands of the police, the local right wing party, the guys at the pub. The conversation by its own force, moves towards the complaints system for such incidents, and the bureaucratic discourse one must use to report circumstances of racist violence.*

*On the flip chart page onto which we record the conversation, the following lexicon emerges:*

**Anti-social**

**B.M.E (Black, Minority, Ethnic)**

**Complaint Bureau**

**Cultural Exchange**

**Discrimination**

**Diversity**

**Don't call your coffee black or white (it's not sensitive)**

**Integration**

**Incident**

**Multi-culturalism**

**Racial tensions**

**Sensitivity**

*'Are these words in themselves a problem?' asks the facilitator.*

*'Many of these words are words we struggled for,' says Betts.*

*'But these words are not what happens to us!... suggests Ali*

*'They do not speak of the violence we experience''*

*'Is this a call for new terms?' Asks the facilitator.*

'Do we need new terms?' In the field of radical pedagogy, this question has had a very particular significance. The relationship between words and worlds, between naming and the agencies of what has been named, has developed through a body of work that has emerged since the 1960s under the headings 'popular education', 'education for critical consciousness', 'political analysis for action' and the 'pedagogy of the oppressed'. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is also the title of the influential book written by Brazilian literacy educator and activist Paulo Freire in 1969, and often stands in as the articulation of what subsequently became a movement of popular education initiated within the global south. In this book, Freire outlines a detailed process for moving from terms to thoughts to actions based in the analysis of concrete conditions: to an understanding of 'reading the word and the world'.<sup>254</sup> Considered in relation to the terms of radical pedagogy, Ali's discussion of the disjuncture between terms and experience, posed nearly 40 years after the writing of the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, occupies itself with the same concern: that is the relation between words spoken and the worlds in which they are experienced?

Freire has suggested on many occasions that he is uninterested in promoting a specific methodology, preferring instead to offer a mix of experiential vignettes, theoretical musings, and passionately articulated process propositions. Yet the praxes described in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and by the popular education movements that have made use of it speak directly to problems in public programming. More broadly they address of the circulation of a *political kind of speech* that is unable to alter the life-worlds of those who use it. Though it was written at the onset of the process of neo-liberalisation rather than in its current advanced moment, the set of commitments mapped out in both Freire's texts and the subsequent workbooks and pamphlets developed by the popular education practitioners he inspired, speak to many of the separations outlined in the last two chapters. They place significant emphasis on the power relations at stake in the process of naming conditions. What are the conditions under which the *naming* of political urgencies takes place? How do we come to the themes and questions that frame our discussions and struggles?

In this chapter, I will explore what practices of 'reading of the word and the world together' might offer the conceptual framework of *thinking with conditions* and the practice of public

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<sup>254</sup> Paulo Freire and Loretta Stover, 'The Importance of the Act of Reading,' *The Journal of Education*, Vol. 165, No. 1 (Winter 1983): 10.

programming. Using transcribed excerpts from sound-art collective Ultra-red's long-term project *Dub Grammar*, developed through the apparatus of a public programme at an art gallery in the southwest of England from 2007-2010, I will look at the ways in which popular education praxes used in this project and more generally, shift the frame from a kind of public programming that is based in the liberal and neoliberal configurations of the public sphere towards public programming as a practice of *thinking with conditions*.<sup>255</sup>

Ultra-red's work has developed at the intersection of sound art theory and the praxes offered by popular education organisers informed by the writing of Paulo Freire. Ultra-red members have come to the work of Paulo Freire and popular education more generally through their experiences as organisers in movements including housing struggles of Latina/o communities in East Los Angeles, HIV and AIDS work through the organisation ACT UP, anti-apartheid activism in South Africa and struggles surrounding racism and anti-racism in Europe. For Ultra-red, engagement with Freire and popular education including the contexts in which this pedagogy was conceived, its relationship to Marxist philosophy and praxis, and the critical and practiced reception of Freire's work has informed the group's own interventions, both in the fields of music and the contemporary art. A commitment to Freire's suggestion of 'reading the word and the world' together and to the practices of listening this entails, has enabled them and the communities with whom they work, to push at the limits of public programmes as they have been described in the last chapters. Here, I engage with both Ultra-red's project *Dub Grammar* and with various dimensions of the work of Freire and popular educators to explore what thinking *with conditions* might entail.

*Dub Grammar* was developed through a curatorial residency that I undertook in Plymouth in the summer of 2007. While the project was meant to last less than three months, it developed over the course of three years, with some elements still operating today. Through this project, localised mutual aid groups and a solidarity network were built between migrants and non-migrants across the Southwest of England to respond, in the first instance, to racist violence, and over time through more convivial and caring support structures. As such it was and is an important site of research and experimentation for how public programming can be otherwise occupied.

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<sup>255</sup> Ultra-red, 'Dub Grammar,' accessed August 30, 2017, <http://www.ultrared.org/pso7g.html>.

This chapter proposes that popular education practices, like those used by Ultra-red and the groups they worked with in the *Dub Grammar* process, offer a conjunctive, polyphonous, compositional, and practiced approach to the many of the stated aims of public programming. It proposes that popular education might provide ways in which to respond to the urgent questions of the contemporary, more than resorting to the 'principles' of the public sphere that we encountered in the last chapters. Working through the collective analysis of conditions, rather than speculating on single solutions like 'direct action', 'defection', 'voice' or speech acts that 'change the face of \_\_\_ politics forever' popular education moves beyond single solution propositions. While they make for interesting reading, such solutions are often offered without addressing the complexity of the conditions we inhabit. Yet history tells us that it is seldom the case that any one political praxis prevails in resistant action; instead, practices of organisation — though often eclipsed by more heroic narratives — are crucial to understanding how radical change can and does take place. By emphasising *thinking with conditions*, popular education praxes suggest a discipline of working through questions of thought, speech, and organization: of questions of the so-called private *and* public spheres, of questions of space *and* time, of questions of the material *and* the immaterial. As such, in producing this conjunctive and organisational approach, popular education praxes address some of the 'generalised separations' we have read about in the last chapters including those related to naming, to time, to affect, to the acoustic arrangements of speaking and listening, and to the infrastructures that are or are not made possible.

### 3.1. Naming Conditions

#### 3.1.1 Naming as the Articulation of Conditions

Once named, the world re-appears to the namers and requires of them a new naming.'  
-Paulo Freire<sup>256</sup>

Ultra-red's practice in the *Dub Grammar* project in a small city art gallery in Plymouth, UK, finds its roots in rural Brazil in the 1960s. This was the world in which Paulo Freire posed the foundational principle of what he described as 'education for critical consciousness', as a literacy instructor working with small rural communities in Brazil. Originally trained in law, Freire was sent to work with so-called peasants through a university extension (or outreach)

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<sup>256</sup> Paulo Freire, 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed: Chapter 3,' *History is a Weapon*, accessed September 18, 2017, <http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon2/pedagogy/pedagogychapter3.html>.

programme. The tremendous distance between the language he was asked to teach and the language spoken by his adult students immediately struck him. The language of instruction was rooted in the city and the life-world of a metropolitan middle class, which was a far remove from the issues and concerns of land and community that were important to the rural peasantry. To intervene in what he imagined to be one of the many leftovers of the colonial process, he developed strategies with his students to create vocabularies from their analysis of their conditions, beginning with the condition of the classroom itself.

In opposition to rote learning and the disengaged literacy education techniques he was asked to implement, he and his students went further, using the process of coming to terms to develop a 'critical consciousness' and a set of actions around the context of their education. It is through this combination of literacy and critical consciousness, that Freire's suggestion of 'the reading of the world and the word' can be understood.

Freire's work and that of subsequent approaches to popular education in Latin America, can be read against the presence of military dictatorships, the work of a metropolitan Communist Left and alongside movements in the Latin American Church toward the 'preferential option for the poor' in which clergy situated biblical teachings within practices of solidarity, 'against inhumane poverty'<sup>257</sup> Freire was informed by these changes in the church, and in particular its democratisation in rural areas, where lay ministers were authorised to perform the sacrament, to interpret 'the word' in relation to their analysis of poverty and the forces that produce it. He was also a contemporary of communists in Brazil, like Carlos Marighella,<sup>258</sup> one of the main proponents of armed urban guerilla struggle, who resisted the notion that liberation should conform to the ideas and strategies of the metropolitan Left, and be rather articulated through the analysis of 'the base' of the opposition: those workers, peasants, women, students, priests,

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<sup>257</sup> According to Peruvian theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez, whose book 'A Theology of Liberation' put this term into circulation, the 'preferential option for the poor' was laid out through meetings of the Latin American Church spanning from Medellín (1968) to Puebla (1979) in relation to growing poverty and social injustice in the region. See Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* (New York: Orbis, 1973); and Daniel Hartnett, 'Remembering the Poor: An Interview with Gustavo Gutierrez,' *America Jesuit Review*, February 3, 2003, accessed July 3, 2017, <https://www.americamagazine.org/issue/420/article/remembering-poor-interview-gustavo-gutierrez>.

<sup>258</sup> Marighella resigned from the Executive Committee of the Brazilian Communist Party in 1967 accusing the leadership of upholding an 'un-Marxist and un-dialectical', monolithic 'kernel of leadership' disconnected from the base of people in struggle, with particular reference to workers, peasants, women, students, priests, Bishops and youth. Carlos Marighella, *For the Liberation of Brazil* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1971), 185.

Bishops and youth, who experienced state violence most profoundly and whose experiences rarely figured in political analysis, even of the radical kind.

Freire often compared the agrarian literacy guides sent from city to country through the extension programmes of the urban universities to the Communist leaflets sent from Sao Paulo to circulate in the northern province of Parnambuco where he taught. Though the materials offered by the state and those by the communist party were on politically opposite sides in their political content, Freire and his students found something similar in what Wendy Brown has elsewhere described as the 'qualitative framework' they employed. Where in the case of the former, *the people* were imagined to learn the words of a technocratic urban middle class to become more productive agrarian workers, in the latter they were to take action vis-à-vis the existing pending revolution.<sup>259</sup>

As such, this qualitative dimension of 'naming' was deeply embedded in questions of power and infrastructure, in legacies of colonialism, and in their implications for the everyday organisation of life and labour. Many readings of Freire focus solely on his opposition to the role of the teacher and the hierarchies of teaching, and equate it with the position outlined in Rancière's *Ignorant Schoolmaster*,<sup>260</sup> where the teacher Jacotot steps aside and allows his students to teach themselves. It would be more accurate to say that Freire's literacy practices re-position this role, making the uneven and problematic relationship between student and teacher the basis for the generation of terms, analyses and, eventually, provocations and transformations of this and other relations of oppression. It is only when both teacher and student 'address their act of cognition towards the object by which they are mediated,' (in this case, the power relations of education) Freire suggests, 'that literacy can take place'.<sup>261</sup>

The problematic condition of the teacher-student relationship is characterised as one of Freire's many 'teaching stories'. In it, he describes a discussion with a group of rural farmers who he has been sent to teach to read and write. After getting to know one another, and, one would imagine, instigated by Freire's openness to addressing the condition of the classroom, they ask why he, the teacher, was understood to be educated and they were not; why he was seen to

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<sup>259</sup> Freire, 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed: Chapter 3.'

<sup>260</sup> Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*.

<sup>261</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 73.

hold knowledge and they were not. Freire opened this question up to the group for discussion. Why indeed? 'It is the work of God,' suggested one of the students. Freire asked whether they, as fathers, would allow some of their children to live in wealth and others to live in poverty, some to have knowledge and others to teach. The farmers cried "no!" Over time they came to another conclusion as to why they had not been educated. A new term emerged: 'boss'.<sup>262</sup>

This process, in Freire's reading of it, was the facilitation of consciousness through which the educand and the educator might come to understand their own roles in the shaping of language and awareness in direct relation to the contradictions of the scene of their encounter. First, they named the immediate contradictions of the educational encounter: a teacher who knew nothing of them or their place in the world had been sent to teach *them*; second, they considered a more distant contradiction: the justification that a seemingly just and loving God could be responsible for the unjust act of unequal distribution of wealth and educational opportunity. Hanging over the story are Freire's own experiences of a particular pedagogy of the Left. 'What would have been completely senseless', suggests Freire, 'would have been if, after the silence that so abruptly followed our dialogue, I had given a speech crammed with intolerable slogans.'<sup>263</sup>

From this story, two principles for *thinking with conditions* emerge. The first is found in Freire's understanding of thought as the site in which to scrutinise generalised terms in relation to the social contradictions they inhabit, where A (the word or the naming) is subject to reflection in relation to B (its place in the world), which in turn produces C, an analysis that moves toward action. The second, crucially, is that this act of reflection and analysis should change the role of the teacher in the classroom, from the one who teaches, to that of a contradictory but collective agent in the struggle against colonial paradigms of education and oppression more widely. The response of Freire and his students to this scenario was to develop their own practices and vocabularies of naming, which were linked to the relations in which they were embedded.

Though arguably a tool of the elite and certainly not one used for the training of peasants, public programmes have something to learn from such practices. Freire's conceptualisations of

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<sup>262</sup> i Later Freire recounts his feeling of success when, in a Culture Circle – groups convened to engage in investigations of local conditions - a participant stated 'Brazil may not change for the better, but I know now that it will not be because of God's will, or because Brazilians are lazy...'

<sup>263</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope* (New York: Continuum, 1992), 38 – 39.

'naming the word and the world together' suggests a process through which people might come together to ascertain the use of terms and how they relate to the relations of power in which they are embedded. Such a process of naming is quite different from the invention and transmission of new terms and concepts in the elite global sphere of public programming in which words are invoked to produce urgency, yet often are not interrogated within the social and political contexts in which they are uttered. In the case of *Dub Grammar*, for example, and in Ali's call for 'new terms', public programming moves from a site that has been named to a site in which naming might take place as a process of changing relations.



Figure 3.1 Index cards for the literacy programme of the municipality of Angicos, in the State of Rio, designed by Freire codifying the term 'kitchen'.<sup>264</sup>

<sup>264</sup> Fóruns de EJA, 'Fichas de cultura – Angicos'n(Flickr, photo, 2011), <https://www.flickr.com/photos/59760939@N07/sets/72157630396883456/>.



mi\_lho

fei\_ra

Figure 3.2: Index cards for the literacy programme of the municipality of Angicos, in the State of Rio, designed by Freire codifying the terms 'Corn' and 'Market'.

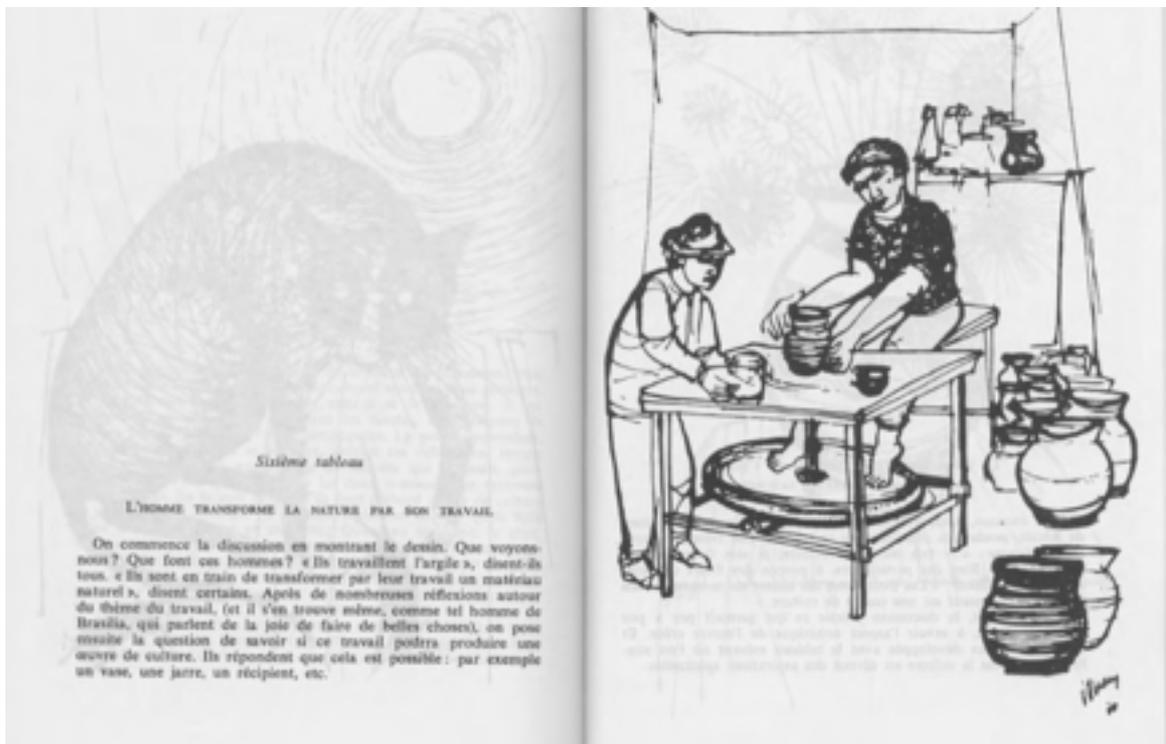


Fig 3.3. :Man Transforms Nature with his work'  
 Illustrations for Education as a Practice of Freedom, French Version  
 From Freire Archive at the World Council of Churches, Geneva



Figure 3.4: images from the travelling slide presentation of generative words including first and last slides and excerpt from the series, 'favela' and projector used, for the National Program of Alphabetisation for the State of Rio. <http://acervo.paulofreire.org:8080/xmlui/handle/7891/656>

### 3.1.2 Naming as Reflection, Analysis and Action

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In Freire's articulation of his collaborative work with his students, he finds allies amongst an early twentieth-century semiologist, Charles Sanders Peirce. He joins Peirce in complicating the Saussurian bi-nominal semiology in which the sign is composed of signifier and signified (word and sound pattern) to the continual and tripartite relation of the representam (the form of the sign), the object (or the sign's referent, its subject matter) and its interpretant, its confirmation into the system of signs, or the 'sense made of it'. For Peirce, even if there is little sense made of the relationship between the representam and the object to which it refers, its validity and meaning comes through the act of interpretation, and into the conditions of the present. Much like Barthes' notion of the 'deciding group', for Peirce, if its interpreters understand and confer its sense, it becomes more powerful. In Peirce's system, 'Nothing is a sign unless it is interpreted as a sign'.<sup>265</sup> Like Peirce, Freire's suggestion of reading of the world and the word (and his later articulation of the reading of the word as the re-writing of the world), promotes a strong attachment to the process of confirmation and the consensus of its use vis-à-vis its context.

Within the context of public programming, it is often through terms that events, attendees and organisations propel the frenzy of idle talk. In the virtuosic context of utterance described by Virno, the performance of political speech is denied a process for creating consensus, or of acting collectively. It is also what is missing in the example with which we began – a situation in which the language of 'diversity' finds no consensus amongst those who have experienced racist violence.

In Peirce's system, the sign may have an arbitrary relationship to the thing to which it refers on a formal level, but its relationship to meaning for those who speak it must still be significant.<sup>266</sup> Similarly, for Freire the arbitrary relationship between the referent and the sign, the slippages between the use of terms and the conditions under which they are used, are not to be let to rest: they are grounds for collective interpretation, investigation, and action. As with Peirce, this

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<sup>265</sup> Charles Sanders Peirce, *Collected Writings*, eds. Charles Hartshorne, Paul Weiss and Arthur W Burks, vol. 2 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931-58), 172.

<sup>266</sup> *ibid.*, vol. 5, 323.

distance, which can highlight fundamental contradictions, is understood as material to be worked with and developed collectively.

While idle talk and *speaking and thinking without conditions* is not a problem of linguistic theories per se, it is also important to emphasise that speaking and thinking *with* conditions requires something more than the consensus of free-wielding virtuosic individuals and a resignation to the arbitrariness of signs vis-à-vis their referents. According to both Peirce and Freire, it is through processes of group interpretation, and of weighing the material of language in relation to the conditions of the situation, in order to understand its significance and relevance to those who use it, that meaning is conferred.

Freire also takes this act of interpretation further than Peirce, suggesting that such confirmation take place through reflection, analysis *and* action in relation to the life of terms. 'There is not true word' suggests Freire, 'that is not a praxis'. Truth, here, is not to be understood simply within the dichotomy truth/lie, or even its contemporary variant truth/post-truth, but rather a more complex set of contingencies. The word is *true* if it names the conditions under which it is spoken by reflecting on those conditions, analyses those conditions *and* acts or intervenes in them, only to reflect again. In this cyclical process, which he names 'dialogic', reflection is a collective process, which must be connected to action; without action, reflection is 'akin to an alienated and alienating blah'.<sup>267</sup> Whether at the hands of a government consultation exercise, an inconsequential conference in an art gallery or a mock debate, collective thought without action, leaves the word in an impoverished state, or in Freire's words, 'mere verbalism' or 'idle chatter'.<sup>268</sup> For Freire, unlike the configuration of the public sphere, collective speech and thought do not only require a specific space or a set of speaking conventions, nor particular acts of voicing. Rather, thinking and speaking together require a commitment to acting upon conditions, to learning from these actions, in order to identify their veracity as praxes.

Freire's call to action within processes of naming is not a call to immediate action. Action without reflection, on the other hand, Freire suggests, is pure 'activism', that is action 'for action's sake', making dialogue impossible and producing a continual set of empty exercises or busy-work, that mirrors the frenzy of work involved in producing the political kind of speech we read about in the last chapter. The evacuation of the truth of the word in these circumstances is

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<sup>267</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 87.

<sup>268</sup> *ibid.*

for Freire an evacuation of the inter-connections between existence, speech and thought, whose linkages are vital to one another.<sup>269</sup> To name, to read or write the world, is rather to change it continually by holding the word accountable to the conditions of its production and the conditions of production accountable to the word. 'Once named, the world re-appears to the namers and requires of them a new naming'.<sup>270</sup>

Freire's approach to naming and pedagogy is aligned with that of the post-revolutionary Russian childhood educator and psychologist Lev Vygotsky. Vygotsky, a pedagogist and psychologist active in the 1920s, positioned himself against early twentieth-century linguists and psychologists, who maintained the relation between word and meaning, but did not include its process of interpretation, or its active integration into lifeworlds. He suggests, 'Word meanings are dynamic rather than static formations.'<sup>271</sup>

For Vygotsky, this dynamic relationship does not take place away from thought. Rather, 'the relation between thought and word is a 'living process', which is a kind of thinking. As in Freire's formulation, the relation between thought and word plays out in a dynamic relation to action. Vygotsky argues:

'A word devoid of thought is a dead thing, and a thought un-embodied in words remains a shadow. The connection between them, however, is not a preformed and constant one. It emerges in the course of development, and itself evolves. To the Biblical "In the beginning was the Word," Goethe makes Faust reply, "In the beginning was the deed." The intent here is to detract from the value of the word, but we can accept this version if we emphasise it differently: In the beginning was the deed. The word was not the beginning – action was there first; it is the end of development, crowning the deed.'<sup>272</sup>

Vygotsky suggests that the interpretation and use of terms, or the formation of words is always already a dialectical process. In this sense, the word is not only central to thought, or to the

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<sup>269</sup> *ibid.*, 68-69.

<sup>270</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope*, 8.

<sup>271</sup> Lev Vygotsky, 'Thinking and Speaking,' in *Thought and Language*, ed. trans. Eugenia Hanfmann, Gertrude Vakar and Norris Minnick (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1962).

<sup>272</sup> *ibid.*

production of terms, but linked to historical and epochal concerns. It is for this reason that the 'meaningful word' can be read 'as a microcosm of human consciousness.'<sup>273</sup> He elaborates:

'... if language is consciousness that exists in practice for other people and therefore for myself, then it is not only the development of thought but the development of consciousness as a whole that is connected with the development of the word.'<sup>274</sup>

Far from the language that wanders homeless, the political kind of speech explored in the first chapters of this thesis, Freire and Vygotsky suggest a practice of thinking with conditions that is attendant to a positioning of the word as a microcosm of thought, itself oscillating between actions – of the teacher, the students and both upon the world that exists beyond the classroom. Thinking with conditions is related precisely to this, to the linking of terms to their surroundings and the interpretation of their use vis-à-vis the actions that have and could be experienced by those affected by them.

The entry and time to the process of naming that Freire calls literacy, then, is not about learning language *per se*; it is not about the ease of performative and provocative terms; and nor is it strictly about communication; it is rather a proposition for practices of collective deliberation as critical consciousness (*conscientização* is Freire's term in Portuguese) and the struggle for change. For Freire, literacy is not only the collective production of language, but also the social and political reproduction of life.

Though often contextualised in relation to democratic principles of dialogue and the public sphere, Freire's notion of dialogue goes further than speaking, thinking with each other, or deliberating together. In 'reading the world and the word' the word must be intricately connected to life and action in the everyday. The word does not simply reflect the deed nor does the deed only exist as a reflection of the word. The word is part of a dynamic interplay

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<sup>273</sup> Despite the many parallels in their thought, Freire would not have been familiar with Vygotsky's work at the time of writing *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and other early works, as it was suppressed in Russia until the 1980s with much of his writings on pedagogy not published until the late 1990s – Freire died in 1997. There are also many dissonances between both their contexts and Vygotsky's focus on 'inner speech' or the inner lives of individuals and Freire's focus on the collective and social process of enunciation.

<sup>274</sup> Biographical information from Martin Oscarsson, 'Vygotsky - a Reawakened Star.'  
*Socialisten: The Voice of Marxism in the Swedish Labour Movement* (April 2001). More information on dissonances between Freire and Vygotsky can be found in Mariana Souto-Manning and Peter Smagorinsky, 'Freire, Vygotsky and Social Justice Theories in English Education,' in *Change Matters: Moving Social Justice from Theory to Policy*, eds. S.J. Miller and David Kirkland (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 2010); and Vygotsky, 'Thinking and Speaking.'

between thinking or reflection and action in which the world is made and re-made. Its dynamics are driven, not by the liberal notion of democratic consensus, but by the condition of fundamental inequality, the contradictions, the messes, the imbalances and problematics that produce dissonance between terms and their referents, and between thoughts and actions and the production of a new 'common sense' that is based in collective political struggle.

In the example with which we began, of a public programme in which a group assembles to 'come to terms' with the naming practices that surround their experience of racist violence, the group indicates the need to interrogate the terms under which they have gathered. Their call for new terms is not only a desire for a changed vocabulary, but the assertion of a need to change terms in order to change the avenues of possible action. In public programmes the role of interrogating terms is often assigned to intellectuals, or to personality brands whose ideas circulate through processes of naming, or processes that resonate superficially and often for very brief periods of time with contemporary urgencies. Thinking with conditions calls for much more carefully considered points of departure in which the practice of naming, of ascertaining the resonance of terms with groups is slowed down, grounded, and embedded in group processes of thinking with the intention of moving beyond the space and time of the encounter. As we will read in later sections of this chapter, such a practice of naming does not exclude the role of theory or theorisation, nor the practices of specialists well read in particular areas, but changes the emphasis, orientation, and trajectory of what a public programme might be.

Using Freire's understanding of the deep embodiment of terms within life worlds, offers a gauge that marks the difference between a critical practice of naming and the adoption and circulation of untethered terms and 'urgencies', or the endless chatter of 'idle talk'. A practice of collective attention to the conditions under which encounters take place — with a mind to changing them — is pitted against the proliferation of solo virtuosic performances often by intellectual celebrity figures.

### 3.1.3 Generative Words

If the practice of naming is based in a dialogue between practices of reflection, analysis and action, then words become generative on a number of levels: they can be generative of subjectivities, groups, organisations, and organising practices. The notion that words move

beyond performative articulation, beyond speaking and thinking together, and towards the making of worlds, through practices of organisation or organizing has important implications for the more radical forms of public programming with which this chapter is concerned. For in Ultra-red's *Dub Grammar* project, the implications of naming move beyond the formal classroom education in which Freire's earliest observations emerged. Working with Friere's practice in the context of the *Dub Grammar* allowed us to experiment on another terrain with the theoretical and practical propositions suggested in this bringing together of the world and the word.

bell hooks argues that the context of reading the word and the world together offers something that moves well beyond classroom practice. Rather than focus on the subject position of Freire<sup>275</sup>, or the problematic posed by Freire's work for those working in formal higher education<sup>276</sup> as have some feminist scholars, she suggests that what is at stake in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is an orientation to knowledge production and/as the re-organisation of the world. She suggests that the mode of criticism of Freire often positions readers as observers of his work, not at those aligned with or as members of oppressed groups fighting against oppression.<sup>277</sup> hooks emphasises the decolonising attributes of Freire's writing, understanding education for critical consciousness as an articulation of practices that take place within marginalised communities of colour, not strictly as the ideas of an individual author like Freire. While also critical of the sexism in Freire's dated language, and, though hooks does not address them, the absence of recognition of female co-authors and collaborators, including his partner Elza Freire, she also emphasises that the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* has its greatest effects in the lives of those who 'suffer the gravest weight of oppressive forces'<sup>278</sup> and that this may not be legible to all feminist critics.<sup>279</sup> She thus reads the relation between teacher and student outlined in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* as emerging not from a

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<sup>275</sup>Kathleen Weiler, 'Freire and a Feminist Pedagogy of Difference,' *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol. 61, No. 4 (December 1991): 453.

<sup>276</sup> Linda Keesing-Styles, 'The Relationship between Critical Pedagogy and Assessment in Teacher Education in Radical Education,' *Radical Pedagogy*, 5, 1 (March 2003);

<sup>277</sup> bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 46.

<sup>278</sup> *ibid.*, 47.

<sup>279</sup> *ibid.*, 53.

position outside of questions of oppression, in which one might observe and critique, but from within an organised practice of 'profound solidarity.'<sup>280</sup>

It is this question of solidarity that moves Freire's work from the generative word to the generative world that is produced in the relation between thought and action in the act of naming. It is in terms of solidarity that we can understand the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* as a tool of *organisation* as much or more than one of *education*. This is not to discount the use of popular education in more formal education settings but to suggest that it has been used more potently within the context of broader social and political re-organisation. And it is this use, in the linking of collective naming to collective processes of organisation, that I read Freire's work with regard to public programming.

Under the term 'popular education', Freire's work became associated with organizing efforts and political actions undertaken by grassroots organizations in South America in the 1970s. Such movements were deemed popular, because they took, 'a clear stand in support of the hopes and aspirations of the vast majority of the people in South and Central America'.<sup>281</sup> In Latin America in the 70s, popular education joined liberation theology in placing itself as the *preferential option for the poor*, offering a set of tools 'to help people develop the skills needed to organize and take more control over their own lives.'<sup>282</sup> Popular education served practices of organisation both before liberation, in the mode of consciousness raising as in the case of Brazil, but also operated alongside armed struggles, for example in the movement Sandinistas in Nicaragua and in liberation movements in El Salvador. In Nicaragua, a massive literacy crusade drawing on 100,000 volunteers taught 400,000 people how to read and write, reducing the rate of illiteracy from 51% to 12% in just 6 months, while at the same time supporting the attempts of communities to re-organise the power relations that shaped their lives.<sup>283</sup> Popular education was also a strategy for post-liberation social re-organisation in Tanzania and in Guinea Bissau, where the praxes of naming the word and the world were implemented as part of the process of massive de-colonial social re-organisation.

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<sup>280</sup> *ibid.*, 58.

<sup>281</sup> Rick Arnold and Bev Burke, *A Popular Education Handbook* (Toronto: OISE Press, 1983).

<sup>282</sup> Arnold, Barndt and Burke, *A New Weave: Popular Education in Canada and Central America*, 17.

<sup>283</sup> *ibid.*, 18.

Paolo and Elza Freire and others involved in the IDAC group of the World Council of Churches in Geneva spent the years from 1970-79 as collaborators with the post-revolutionary government of Guinea Bissau, on their first articulation of a liberatory, anti-colonial pedagogy for the newly liberated state. In letters written to the then Commissioner of Education, Mario Cabral, the group suggested that the emergent thought-language born of a literacy informed by the life conditions of the liberation struggle had to be thought beyond the confines of education or schooling *per se* but with and as the re-organisation of the means of production and reproduction of society. In these letters, he clarifies that there is a difference between *language literacy*, by which he means the technical work of determining more relevant terms for the purposes of people learning to read and write and *political literacy*, which includes language literacy, but is broader, involving the re-organisation of social life and relations of power as they articulated themselves in the everyday through practices of solidarity.<sup>284</sup> *Political literacy*, he suggested, could only be realised within the context of 'universities of the people' built to marry questions of social and intellectual production and reproduction with those of intellectual and linguistic pursuit.<sup>285</sup>

In addition to these uses, in the 1980s popular education networks were built across the Americas, including the Alforja network in the 80s, a regional coordinating network that served six member popular education centres in Central America and Mexico. They also extended into popular education centres in the US and Canada, who, built on past traditions of settlement

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<sup>284</sup> It should be noted that these ideas were not only based on Freire's ideas or past experiences but the learning of the IDAC group from the work undertaken in the liberated zones of Guinea Bissau. Education programmes established within liberated territories graduated more students in the ten years of the war for liberation, than in five centuries of anti-colonial rule that pre-ceded them, but also, by necessity, developed strong relations between re-productive questions around the organisation of life and resources and questions of literacy and thought in the academic or 'schooled' sense. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy in Process: The Letters to Guinea-Bissau* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016), 10.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

houses<sup>286</sup> and US-based popular education developed during the civil rights movement,<sup>287</sup> and were newly infused by learning in Latin America. In the 1980s encounters between popular educators in North, South and Central America were facilitated as part of coordinated attempts in working with communities as part of intersectional organising strategies against the onset of neoliberal policies. They joined networks of what have been described as 'movement halfway houses'. Movement Halfway Houses which were not sites of the spectacles or mass demonstrations, nor were they the platforms in which speeches are made. Instead, they were sites in which groups could 'develop a battery of social change resources'<sup>288</sup> and through which smaller groups could align around particular problems and build the capacities to engage in larger scale movements. The 'house' of the halfway house is not necessarily a space, but a context in which groups can assemble, build up histories, skills, and plan future trajectories. The house-keeping is the shared and reproductive work of maintaining spaces in which people can think with conditions.<sup>289</sup>

These were not organising practices based on Freire's thought *per se*, or examples of what Freire himself described as a 'mechanical and alienating transplant' of methodology but a movement of praxes which drew from elements of Freire's experience with students and experiential learning from the context of struggle and re-combined them with local organising processes.<sup>290</sup> Though disparate in context, what is consistent in all of these cases is the act of collective naming in relation to the organisation and re-organisation of social relations.

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<sup>286</sup> Settlement Houses were crucial sites that began in the UK but existed in Canada and US in which intellectuals lived amongst poor communities sharing reproductive tasks, teaching and research. While some operated in a more traditional charity mode, others were resolutely feminist spaces in which a great deal of experimentation took place in terms of roles, sexualities and the organisation of life. See Mark K. Smith, 'University and Social Settlements, and Social Action Centres,' *The Encyclopaedia of Informal Education*, 1999, accessed August 10, 2017, <http://infed.org/mobi/university-and-social-settlements/>.

<sup>287</sup> The most prominent of these was the Highlander Folk School in Appalachia run collectively but most identifiably associated with Myles Horton. Highlander was active in labour struggles in the 1930s but had been a crucial site for grassroots learning where activists including Ella Baker and Rosa Parks studied alongside civil rights work. The Highlander hosted Freire, Sandinista educators and others from Latin America See more on the Highlander School in Frank Adams, *Unearthing Seeds of Fire: The Idea of Highlander* (North Carolina: John F. Blair, 1975). More on Freire's encounters with Highlander can be found in Myles Horton, *We Make the Road by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990).

<sup>288</sup> *ibid* 139-140.

<sup>289</sup> Arnold, Barndt and Burke, *A New Weave: Popular Education in Canada and Central America*, 27.

<sup>290</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy in Process: The Letters to Guinea-Bissau*, 74.

In 'Naming the Moment', the title of one of the workbooks of the Alforja Network, community organizer, Deborah Barndt suggests that naming is a crucial step in movement building that allows for the various threads and scales of a problematic to be woven together. Naming as she suggests is 'looking at the web of different forces... determining opportunities for action,'<sup>291</sup> but it is also the practice of 'organisation, commitment, and the capacity and desire to pass on strategies to those within their communities'.<sup>292</sup>

It was in the context of developing a political literacy for liberation movements in Latin America and Africa — a political literacy oriented towards a profound re-writing of the knowledge regimes and organising practices of colonialism and the pending horizon of neo-liberalism — that the 'reading of the word and the world together' was particularly generative. The practice of naming the conditions of the classroom described in the last section, then, is here understood in relation to the production and reproduction of social movements, how they think together, not only within or through education, but towards a kind of thinking with the conditions of the present and of radical, pre-figuring of post-capitalist realities of the future.

Crucial to the context of public programmes as *thinking with conditions*, away from the limited framing of the public sphere, is bell hooks question of how one makes use of the fundamental contradictions of the spaces we inhabit, their production and re-production in micro and macro political dimensions of life and organization. hooks suggests that, in reading Freire's work from within oppressive conditions, we learn how to think and generate these intersecting relations — at the level of the articulation of words, groups and inter-subjective relations. Here Freire's approach to the question of the generation of the word aligns social production and reproduction in ways that help us rethink how community-organising efforts based in popular education have taken up questions of both the public and 'the private' more actively.

In *Dub Grammar* the conditions of neoliberal language and speech production emerge in Ali's suggestions that terms such as 'diversity', 'integration', 'BME', '*do not speak of the violence we experience.*' In public programming based in the voice oriented public sphere, it would be enough to simply 'give voice' to the 'victims' of racism, to hear their stories, or to give space to theorists to critically debate the insufficiency of key terms. In popular education's mode of thinking with conditions, the call for 'new terms' and to 'speak of the violence of experience'

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<sup>291</sup> Deborah Barndt, *Naming the Moment: Political Analysis for Action: A Manual for Community Groups* (Toronto: The Moment Project, 1984), 7.

<sup>292</sup> *ibid.*

are re-framed as a call to both re-orient practices of speaking and listening and to organise terms for change that are embedded in the life worlds of all those who listen. A call for new terms is a call to re-think the practices of organisation and solidarity bound to these terms and much as the words that are used or the agents who speak them. This solidarity necessarily leads us beyond the public dimension of their utterance, towards the affective landscapes (private pains) they produce and the way in which lives, support mechanisms and communities are organised around them. As with a popular education workbook from the 1980s that linked women's groups and anti-globalisation solidarity efforts across the Americas suggests, this 'movement from practice to theory to practice, or between action and reflection', becomes a 'a way of thinking'<sup>293</sup> that is at once intimate, dialectical, [and] ongoing<sup>294</sup>. They argue that the practice of popular education constitutes a 'new weave' threading between 'thought and action'.<sup>295</sup>

Popular education understood as a process of thinking with conditions in order to change those very conditions, offers an important counter-position to the impoverished state of contemporary public programming and its idle talk — a condition in which words that articulate contemporary urgencies remain 'in the air', and are barred from potential action. Here, Freire's position of naming practices, of coming to terms as moments in which to re-organise social relations increases the stakes of Ali's call for 'new terms' and positions public programming as a site from which to engage, support, and develop new organising practices from within the conditions of oppression. The 'public' here is not a general public with generalised terms, but one very much situated within its conditions, and with the intention and desire to change them. Crucial to such a collective process of naming or finding new terms, moreover is the practice of listening — a practice that has a very particular and nuanced significance in the practices of Ultra-red, as the following section now explores.

### 3.2 Acoustic Conditions

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As we learned in the previous chapters, in the framework of public programming and the tropes of the public sphere upon which it draws, speaking voices are often attributed more agency than practices of listening. Couldry's proposition that a 'voice-centred approach' is the

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<sup>293</sup> Barndt, *Naming the Moment: Political Analysis for Action: A Manual for Community Groups*, 24.

<sup>294</sup> Arnold, Barndt, and Burke, *A New Weave: Popular Education in Canada and Central America*, 4.

<sup>295</sup> *ibid.*, 1.

only one that will circumvent the devaluing processes of neo-liberalisation may be inclusive of listening and an expanded notion of voice to a certain extent.<sup>296</sup> Yet it reiterates a voice-centred politics that is not poised to hear the grounded, complex, and contingent set of relations, the organising practices, and the sounds of 'justice and private pain' that address the specificity of conditions. Attending to conditions of listening has the capacity to turn our attention towards the micropolitical detail of organizing, helping us to identify and value the affective and relational material of politics: friendship, solidarity, and 'bridging' that hold together a virtuosity that is not grounded in the sovereign speaking subject. To highlight listening, in other words, is also to valorise a vital and deeply under-valued practice within social reproduction that is often encountered in the low and non-paid and precarious work of care that unevenly falls upon women, and in particular women of colour. To attend to listening is also to valorise listening as a form of labour, which, as feminist movements have suggested, is both captured by and regularly exceeds capitalist modes of value production.

This is not to say that a shift from a prioritisation of the voice to the prioritisation of listening in politics necessarily offers a more effective political practice. John Holloway enjoins us to rethink political action outside of the binary of 'either or'. Such an approach entails neither 'a politics not of talking but of listening,' nor 'of listening-and-talking' but a politics of listening-and-talking.<sup>297</sup> Extending the terms of Holloway's injunction, this section makes the argument that listening can be thought within but also beyond the terms of its subordinate relation to dialogue; listening can, in other words, be re-imagined beyond its narrow sense as a response or pre-condition of speech. It can be conceptualized as a more expansive practice that entails more nuanced modes of attention to political conditions. Listening can certainly enable those individuals and groups who seek responses to the shared problems and limits in their lives, to attune to both the signifying and a-signifying dimensions of politics and therefore more expanded practices of thinking. It can also function as a radical pedagogical tool that allows us to reimagine public programming in such a way that also enables us to begin to think with conditions.

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<sup>296</sup> Couldry for example suggests that the voice 'cuts across politics and non-politics', and can be thought of as 'process', as 'reflexive agency' as 'social and not individual', as material and as listening.. However, even in this expanded conception, it is difficult to imagine what he is describing outside of the notion of the practice of speaking subjects and this does not account for a-signifying dimensions, organisational processes and the concrete applications of such a notion in the realisation of other modes of re-imagining public. Couldry, *Why Voice Matters*, 9.

<sup>297</sup> John Holloway, *Crack Capitalism* (London, New York: Pluto Press, 2010), 77.

### 3.2.1 Beyond Speaking and Listening

Don Ihde writes in his work on listening and voice that, 'for the human listener there is a multiplicity of senses in which there is word in the wind.' He suggests that 'Word does not stand alone but is present in a field of deployed meaning in which it is situated' and that there are always 'other significations' along with words describing the word. These 'other significations can be read as a 'co-presence'. Listening is the act of discerning this co-presence.<sup>298</sup> As he explains:

'The child's laughing voice reverberates harmoniously with the look of her smiling face when she receives a gift. But at another extreme there are variations between the said and the unsaid that equally hold the possibilities of dissimulation. He smiles as he speaks, but his unkindness shows darkly through his words in the touch of sarcasm revealed.'<sup>299</sup>

Ihde suggests, it is only 'he/[she/they] who listens well that can detect these subtleties that do not always float on the surface of the words. And he/[she/they] who does not or cannot listen deeply may hear only the words.'<sup>300</sup> Listening, then, is an attunement to the qualities of sound, both the words and a-signifying affects that coincide with them.

Since the onset of electro-acoustic sound production, a number of theorists have attempted to hone in on this training, of how one receives and interprets sound. Theorist Pierre Schaeffer, drawing heavily from phenomenology, for example, suggests that 'reduced listening',<sup>301</sup> that is, the isolation of particular sounds or 'sound objects' from the world of the visual, accompanied by particular 'acoustic actions' or the organisation of listening scenarios, can help us to analyse sound more precisely. n.<sup>302</sup> Building on Schaeffer's work, the sound theorist Francois Delalande suggests that practices of listening are in fact practices of co-conditioning the relation between

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<sup>298</sup> Don Ihde, *Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound, Second Edition* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007), 149.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>301</sup> Pierre Schaeffer, 'Solfege de l'objet Sonore,' *Ubuweb papers*, 1966, accessed September 18, 2017, [http://ubu.com/papers/schaefer\\_solfege.pdf](http://ubu.com/papers/schaefer_solfege.pdf).

<sup>302</sup> Michel Chion, *Guide to Sound Objects [1983]*, trans. John Dack and Christine North (unpublished manuscript, London, 2009), accessed 20 February 2014, <http://www.ears.dmu.ac.uk>.

sound objects and those who listen, with the capacity to both reinforce or re-orient the desires and thinking of those who listen.

Delalande's studies of sound reception suggest that listeners oscillate between the three different registers of taxonomic listening, empathetic listening, and figurative listening. 'Taxonomic listening', denotes the general impression of sound objects; 'empathetic listening'<sup>303</sup> refers to the ways in which listeners respond through sensations, which they consolidate into metaphors; and finally 'figurative' listening, in which they attempt to construct a narrative in which sounds move into a more representational form.<sup>304</sup> By moving through these different registers, practices of listening oscillate between physiological, sensational, concrete, and imaginary modes.<sup>305</sup>

While sound theorists are predominantly interested in the reception of sounds by individuals, for the sound and political art collective Ultra-red, listening is the act of organising collective sound and politics. Drawing from readings of popular education described in the first section of this chapter, and of sound theory, the collective suggests that a 'pedagogy of the ear' attunes practitioners to the spoken and unspoken elements of political organisation. In this pedagogical practice, the various apparatus that enable speaking and listening to take place, such as, for example, the microphone, play a significant role not only in the speech act but in 'amplifying, directing, organizing, inflecting, sharpening, and mediating the desire to hear.'<sup>306</sup> Listening, they suggest, is 'organized on behalf of the microphone.'<sup>307</sup> Other entities such as flip chart papers, markers, or chairs in a circle can produce different practices but also re-orient relations to both sounds and desires within a group. These entities can, for example, change the nature of listening from one that is focused on individual virtuosity, to the collective virtuosity of the group.

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<sup>303</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid., 47 – 51.

<sup>305</sup> E.L. Anderson, 'Materials, Meaning and Metaphor: Unveiling Spatiotemporal Pertinences in Acousmatic Music'M(unpublished PhD thesis, City University London, 2011).

<sup>306</sup> Ultra-red, *10 Preliminary Theses for a Militant Sound Investigation* (New York: Printed Matter, 2008), [http://asounder.org/resources/ultrared\\_10theses.pdf](http://asounder.org/resources/ultrared_10theses.pdf). 2

<sup>307</sup> *ibid*

Ultra-red's articulation of the politics of listening emerges from within their engagement with feminist and intersectional organising practices in relation to AIDS and HIV, community-housing struggles and anti-racism activism, in each case linking the organisation of acoustic conditions to power, of who speaks and who listens, but also the more than human, signifying and a-signifying dimensions of the production of groups. Such an approach is distinguished from models of community organising based solely on the idea of the public sphere, which privilege speech and a 'competition of interests'.

Instead, Ultra-red approach listening as a practice of community organisation informed by popular education, and focus on the different scales at which politics is conditioned; in so doing, they try to link the so-called public and private aspects of communication. Robert Sember, one of the groups' members, has suggested that feminist and queer movements enabled both an 'embodied listening and the collective sharing of narratives or reflections on issues of the body' that was fundamental to the 'movement of bodies in the streets'.<sup>308</sup> In the work of community-housing struggles in which 'municipal housekeeping' expands the private sphere, organised listening, says Sember, is undertaken to define the limits encountered by those in a process of thinking together, but also in the caring processes required to build and reproduce 'movements and coalitions'. And within histories of anti-racist struggle, practices of listening reveal the complex sites in which organising can take place. W.E.B. Du Bois heard in 'sorrow songs,' or 'spirituals,' the 'harmonic and dissonant layers of recollection and experience' that informed inquiry into the 'sound of the color line.'<sup>309</sup> Equally, in the accounts of the SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) campaigns in the civil rights movement we are told that organisers like Ella Baker began by teaching organizers how to listen: '...before we ever got around to saying what we had to say, we listened.' The work of community organizers, says long time American organiser Grace Lee Boggs, is to 'listen to the grass roots for new questions that require new paradigms.'<sup>310</sup>

In the project *Dub Grammar*, as with other Ultra-red projects, it is through a practice of organised listening that terms and questions begin to emerge—questions which have the

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<sup>308</sup> Lucia Farinati and Claudia Firth, *The Force of Listening* (California: Errant Bodies Press, 2017), 36.

<sup>309</sup> *ibid*

<sup>310</sup> Grace Lee Boggs, *Living For Change: An Autobiography*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

potential to de-naturalise existing relations. Questions such as, *what is the sound of racism?* or *what is the sound of anti-racism?* for example, provoke other paradigms for considering the politics of anti-racism. How could racism be a sound? How could it be heard? What would it mean to *listen* to new dimensions of anti-racism? In this context, the act of considering how to produce a sonic response to the political, allows for a mode of thinking that, as in the case of Maria's sound, brings together signifying and a-signifying conditions, questions of justice and private pain, laughter and the affects of solidarity alongside the trauma of racism. Predominant linguistic or bureaucratic discourses, which are based on a particular kind of speaking that accepts the naturalised categories for talking about racism can foreclose more sensory, experiential and situational conditions. Against this foreclosure, organised listening can 'enable groups to hear' these 'new questions that require new paradigms.'

In a similar vein, the question *what did you hear?* calls for those in the room to listen in a very particular way by attending to what they have heard on the different registers, thereby producing new conditions and allowing 'new paradigms' to emerge. In this listening process, groups may find markedly different, even contradictory responses that convene these different registers. Like the the making of sound objects dissonances also include a-signifying content that requires a deeper sense of listening, so that repeated linguistic forms and performances do not take hold in the analysis. A central aspect of neo-liberal capitalism's mode of production, is to '... direct language, as it is spoken, as it is taught, as it is televised, as it is dreamt..'in such a way that it remains 'perfectly adapted to its own evolution'.<sup>311</sup> Against neoliberalism's regime of public discourse, listening as a process of de-codification de-naturalises, redirects and re-orientes what is heard, enabling the production of 'new terms' and affective responses to arise.

### 3.2.2 Neo-Liberal Listening and The Listening Intention

If within post-Fordism, virtuosic performances, or acts of speaking and thinking together in public are subsumed under the governing devices of labour, practices of listening are also at times subjected to this relationship. Practices of listening, though more attentive to those elements often excluded from conceptions of the public sphere, are certainly not exempt from these effects. As we heard in the previous chapters, modes of post-Fordist subjectivation attached to public programming actively disable listening that produces emancipatory political

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<sup>311</sup> Felix Guattari, *The Machinic Unconscious: Essays in Schizoanalysis* (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2010), 32.

consequences; they set up moments in which people speak and are heard but actively disable acts of deeper listening.

In the process of producing the *Dub Grammar* project, the difference between the kind of listening that allows for 'new paradigms' to emerge and those that prescribe and limit possible outcomes was articulated by a worker from an anti-racism charity. He recounted the movement of their organisation from the anti-racism struggles of the 1970s to those of the present. In an earlier period of the group's history, organisers came together to think about their conditions, and to listen to each other in such a way that worked towards the emergence of new paradigms of struggle; in contrast, he suggests that 'listening' today is dominated by the organisational demands of the diversity apparatus. In this new conjuncture, listening, he implies, is organised to support both the release and blockage of those in struggle. He recounted a recent situation in which he participated in a 'speed dating' session for groups representing 'victims' of hate crime held by policy makers and funders. NGO workers were paired with policy makers and asked to 'make their case' in under thirty seconds for why the 'victims' they support were more worthy than those represented by other organisations. Through this extreme example, he suggests that this experience exemplified the way in which state and charitable bodies 'manage' and de-politicise the modes of expression through mechanisms of listening. There is here a regular oscillation between the freedom of speech and the controls imposed by listening scenarios that direct both the mode of expression, including short, victim testimonies and passionate pleas; and the range of actions that result from what has been heard.<sup>312</sup> Opportunities to speak and listen for consequences are sites of struggle. Public programmes could be one such site. If we approach public programming as a site for listening to and with conditions, we can also begin to turn away from the neoliberal terms that have both framed and hampered public programming; and thereby also begin to listen out for other, more radical genealogies of public programming in the collective archives and memories of anti-racist struggle and radical pedagogy.

In Ultra-red's *10 Theses for a Militant Sound Investigation* some of the planes upon which the struggle against neo-liberal forms of listening are waged are laid out.<sup>313</sup> One such plane is the 'value form of participation', in which governmental listening joins other modes of symbolic

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<sup>312</sup> Author's fieldwork notes, *Dub Grammar*, July 2007.

<sup>313</sup> Ultra-red, *10 Preliminary Theses for a Militant Sound Investigation* (New York: Printed Matter, 2008), [http://asounder.org/resources/ultrared\\_10theses.pdf](http://asounder.org/resources/ultrared_10theses.pdf).

participation that extract value. 'In its value form,' they suggest, 'participation produces a very specific kind of knowledge...that aligns the subject with the terms of the master,' producing, 'all manner of imaginary identifications' ("I am the product of the master's desire for knowledge").<sup>314</sup> Pitted against both this kind of participation and an 'activism' that dictates a controlled set of resolutions to what is heard, they narrate a set of 'listening intentions', a term used by Pierre Schaeffer to suggest that listening is shaped by the attitudes and intentions of those who listen.<sup>315</sup> As Schaeffer describes, listening intentions, as much as what is heard, 'give meaning to the aural material' of a group. Or, as Freire suggests, '...it is not only the content but the various manners in which one approaches the content, that stand in direct relation to its levels of struggle...'<sup>316</sup> 'Listening intentions' mark an orientation to the signifying and a-signifying aspects of listening to cultivate group analysis and desire.

For Ultra-red, a key intention is related to the time of their own commitment to what is heard in the process of listening that takes place beyond the event of its utterance. 'To take the microphone out of the box and switch it to RECORD brings responsibility,' they say.<sup>317</sup> This responsibility unfolds across an expanded temporal plane that is unpredictable in its cultivation of desire. Where speech is understood in terms of the time period of its utterance, 'analytical listening' they suggest, 'multiplies the recording or playback time of the sound field'. Consequently, 'an hour of recorded time, or an hour of playback time becomes multiple hours in an investigation yielding the soundscape.'<sup>318</sup> Through the elongated temporalities of listening, they suggest, 'one hears the site being organized.'<sup>319</sup> Following on from this, another of their 'listening intentions' suggests that committed listening exceeds the movement to a quick articulation of demands. To fixate too early on 'demands that do not resonate with the curiosity, friendship, [or] love that binds the team,' is to erroneously suggest that the microphone, and those who use it, 'stand apart from the struggle and represent it dispassionately.'<sup>320</sup> These aspects of listening—curiosity, friendship, love, responsibility, passion

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<sup>314</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>315</sup> Schaeffer, 'Solfege de l'objet Sonore.'

<sup>316</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope*, 33.

<sup>317</sup> Ultra-red, *10 Preliminary Theses for a Militant Sound Investigation*, 5.

<sup>318</sup> *ibid.*, 8.

<sup>319</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>320</sup> *ibid.*, 4.

—that bind the team and the machines that support the organisation of the process, is what they describe as ‘affiliation’. ‘Acknowledging an affiliation’, they suggest, ‘renders the first cut inscribed in the undifferentiated field of need, demand, desire.’<sup>321</sup> Demands or sets of actions should not be understood to ‘displace affiliation’; rather, they should be worked towards slowly. ‘The pedagogy of the ear,’ they suggest, is tuned to both what has been said and the ‘affective logic’ of the saying. Within this set of affiliated listening intentions, affects like passion are not mobilised to create affective speech acts so much as to gauge the degree to which a need, limit, or contradiction is important to the group. As they suggest, ‘[t]he degree of passion generated in the argument demonstrates the amount of energy and the depth of investment in the contradiction itself. This contradiction may become the question that serves as the object for the investigation...’<sup>322</sup> In conjoining the signifying and a-signifying aspects of listening, this pedagogy of the ear is able to produce what Don Ihde calls ‘polyphonic’ thinking: a mode of thinking that exists as a co-presence of the imaginative.<sup>323</sup>

The commitment of popular education to cycles of reflection, analysis, and action, here meet ‘polyphonic’ thinking as a direct intervention into neoliberal modes of listening, presenting moments in which to reflect and hone the oppositional listening practices of the group, and to think together about their relationship to the apparatus which has historically been naturalised within their own modes of re-production. Understanding the foreclosures of neoliberal instrumentalisation is here not as the final step in a process, but part of the interrogation of needs, and the strengthening of an investigation is one of the outcomes of committed listening. ‘Hearing the need, questioning that need, and interrogating it in the course of listening’, suggest Ultra-red, ‘marks one contour in an unbounded field.’<sup>324</sup> This ‘unbounded field’ can also present a crisis. For example, the same worker who reflected on the ‘speed dating’ listening apparatus that accompanies state funding, was uncomfortable when the group responded to his own organisation by suggesting alternative listening practices within the NGO that undermined its management structure.

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<sup>321</sup> *ibid.*, 1.

<sup>322</sup> Ultra-red, ‘Another Ten Theses on Militant Sound Investigation,’ in *The Routledge Companion to Art and Politics*, ed. Randy Martin (London: Routledge, 2015). The title refers to Ultra-red’s pamphlet, *10 Preliminary Theses on Militant Sound Investigation*, an earlier exposition of terms to guide collective listening rooted in struggle and accountable to constituency.

<sup>323</sup> Ihde, *Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound*.

<sup>324</sup> Ultra-red, *10 Theses for a Militant Sound Investigation*, 3.

Listening with intentions, which Ultra-red manifest in the arrangement and re-arrangement of various 'protocols for listening' (the production of questions, of convivial and caring encounters, cyclical movements between making and listening to sounds, re-arranging the dynamics of who speaks and who listens and the time allocated to them) provides a site for the organization of an 'unbounded' politics of collective listening that brings neo-liberal listening processes to a point of crisis. Unlike the expressive speech acts of the individual virtuoso, the virtuosity of listening together entails a balance between protocols and intentions and an unbounded temporality: of a politics to come.

### 3.2.3 Silence as a Condition for Listening

In his earliest writings, Freire analyzed the culture of silence as both the theft of the voice of the poor as well as the poor's complicity in their oppression; the interpellation of the poor into the subjectivity of domination. Silence and its culture were to be broken for liberation to be realised. At the same time, however, Freire introduced a different conception of silence into his writings suggesting as we heard above, that facilitators hold back their 'slogans' and adopt a 'discipline of silence'. Silence, therefore, is not just the culture that must be broken in order for liberation to occur. Silence, he suggests, is 'the very condition for listening'.<sup>325</sup> This double-sided relation to silence suggests a constant movement that is propelled by questions such as: Whose silence must be broken? Whose silence must be disciplined? What kinds of silences disable us from listening to conditions and what kinds of silence amplify such conditions?

In this context, 'conditions' refer not only to those entities and experiences that are unspoken but also to the active creation of conditions or the conditioning of situations in which both signifying and a-signifying sounds might be heard. As Ultra-red suggest, a sound investigation 'convenes to organize the silence in which it begins'.<sup>326</sup> In listening as a practice of popular education and community organising, they suggest that the role of the microphone is not only to amplify speech but to record the role of silence.

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<sup>325</sup> Paulo Freire *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy, Civic Courage* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998) 105

<sup>326</sup> Ultra-red, *10 Theses for a Militant Sound Investigation*, 3.

Within popular education such a silence is systematized to enable polyphonic modes of analysis to enter into process. In the theatre work of Augusto Boal, silence is a discipline held in relation to thinking through other modes of articulation. For example, in one of the many games taken from the book *Games for Actors and non-Actors*, participants are asked to walk around a room, keeping equal distance apart.<sup>327</sup> They are asked to be silent or to walk faster and faster. The facilitator says 'stop'. The group is asked to look around the room and suggest what they see. The participants are invited to shout words such as 'close, connected, interested, happy.' Next, participants are asked to move around the room frowning at one another and looking away. 'Stop' says the facilitator again. 'What are the terms that you would use to describe this room? 'Awkward, disjointed, disconnected.' 'Now half the room smile and the other half frown.' Playing the game again and again the group comes to a sense of the relation between a-signifying dimensions and the production of group subjectivation and its relationship to processes of signification. Silence enables a particular awareness of the impact of affective or non-verbal performances on the condition of the group. While not necessarily performed as sounds, this too constitutes a kind of listening for conditions.

Considered in relation to Boal's theatre work<sup>328</sup> and Ultra-red's praxis of listening, Freire's notion of the 'true word' is not about a dichotomy between the true experience and the lie told in a proximate language, or about the privileging of political action over thinking, or about privileging speaking over listening or vice versa. It is rather a facilitated dynamic between the signifier, signified, thought, and action in the complexity of their situation in the world, understood in its spatial, affective, auditory, visual and other sensory conditions. The 'true word' is the interplay between expression (what is spoken) and the situation (what is listened for) through which meaningful statements, interpretations and actions emerge. As such the link between what is spoken and what is listened for and to: the affects, intentions, orientations, and values that surround the act of speaking render words 'true.' Where significations are undertaken in the absence of this interplay, or if they 'seek to choose meaning by a calculus and a wholly technical process,' they will undoubtedly 'fall short of the problems they are trying to solve'.<sup>329</sup>

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<sup>327</sup> Augusto Boal, *Games For Actors And Non-Actors* (Psychology Press, 2002).

<sup>328</sup> See Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed* (Pluto Press, 2000).

<sup>329</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'Indirect language and the Voices of Silence,' in *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, eds V. Toadvine and L. Lawler (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 282.

If silence is a way to heighten particular modes of analysis that are under or de-valued within dominant notions of the public sphere, it is also a way to make room for other modes of thinking to emerge, modes that undo the foundations of particular modes of thinking that are deeply embedded within colonial modes of thinking. 'The microphone,' suggests Ultra-red, 'also has the capacity to recall the investigators to silence.'<sup>330</sup>

Silence in the context of a practice of committed listening must be understood both in terms of the physical act of not making noise and also as silencing or the unlearning of dominant ways of knowing. In Freire's account of the collaborative work that he, Elza Freire and members of the IDAC group at the World Council of Churches undertook with education organisers in Guinea Bissau, he suggests that the silencing of particular modes of analysis is crucial in the practice of de-colonisation. Drawing from the revolutionary leader Amilcar Cabral's suggestion that members of the colonial upper and middle classes must either become part of the revolutionary project by committing 'class suicide' or be part of the counter-revolutionary project, Freire suggests that the silencing of colonial education is crucial in order for groups to *think with their conditions* and develop a mode of knowledge production that is linked to the specificity of the production and re-production of their lives.<sup>331</sup> This silencing of particular forms of knowledge production is not a silencing of people *per se*; rather, it understands silence as a necessary strategy for unlearning class and racialized privilege. Silence targets particular liberal formations of the public that reproduce the class, race and gender dynamics of who speaks and who listens — dynamics which are suggested by Gayatri Spivak in her essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'<sup>332</sup> For the radical pedagogue and the revolutionary project, this can mean a silencing of privileged forms, for example, the platform, or speaking out or debate. This might be a necessary step in what Freire described in a letter to Mario Cabral in 1975, as decolonisation's process of 'reconversion', or ' a permanent revision of the class conditioning'.<sup>333</sup> In Freire's account of silence, as in Ultra-red's, militant researchers 'organize

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<sup>330</sup> Ultra-red, *10 Preliminary Theses for a Militant Sound Investigation*, 4.

<sup>331</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy in Process: The Letters to Guinea-Bissau*, 19.

<sup>332</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in *Can The Subaltern Speak? Reflections On The History Of An Idea*, ed. Rosalind Morris (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 21-78.

<sup>333</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy in Process: The Letters to Guinea-Bissau*, 81.

themselves as technicians of silence.<sup>334</sup> They are not the 'heroes of an analytical listening'; rather, they are engaged in the 'betrayal' of their position, and are happy for others to take over.

While silencing is often understood in the liberal terms of censorship, this kind of silencing of the facilitator is not simply a sign of repression or absence; rather, it is regarded as necessary for the cultivation of other desires to emerge. 'Silence,' suggest Ultra-red, 'is the object cause of the desire to listen.'<sup>335</sup> In the 'soundscape of struggle', silence allows organisers to 'listen with desire' but also emphasizes that they 'listen beyond the contours of their needs' for the inter-subjective, the desire of groups, and of others in the room and in the world.

Silence as a condition for listening, here extends thinking towards what is heard but also what is not heard, to what is sensed, suspected, to the banal and the not always obvious.

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<sup>334</sup> Ultra-red, *10 Preliminary Theses for a Militant Sound Investigation*, 10.

<sup>335</sup> *ibid.*, 5.

### 3.3 Affective Conditions

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In the last chapters we read about a public sphere constituted around questions of justice 'over' those of 'private pain'. In this section, I will describe the way in which popular education practices attempt to suture these two realms—the so-called private and the so-called public—to produce a 'virtuosity of acting together' that attends to the fragilities and insecurities of the contemporary.

To clarify this approach, I turn to Freire's articulation of the making of the 'true' meaning of a word. Freire suggests that terms are oriented towards both analyses and actions in relation to their conditions, in the limit-situations they inhabit, but also as the conditioning or subjectivation of groups. The dynamics between a group's analysis of what is common, not only aid in the production of more meaningful and efficacious terms and actions, but also help to bring groups into collective processes of subjectivation. Though it is not always explicit in the writing of popular educators, Freire suggests the importance of affect in his formulation of dialogue. In dialogue, a 'true' or 'generative' word is created with an orientation toward action but also when the group generates it are motivated by love, hope, empathy, humility, faith, or criticality. In his early formulation of the way in which the interpretation of words takes place in dialogic vs. anti-dialogic frameworks, he elaborates the former, dialogic communication as:

A with B: horizontal communication

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Matrix: Horizontal relationship based in dialogue, the matrix of which is love, empathy, humble, hopeful critical.

And the latter, anti-dialogic communication as:

A

Over

B vertical communication

Matrix: Loveless, arrogant, hopeless, a-critical<sup>336</sup>

Freire's conjugation could be read as simple, moralistic, or even prescriptive. Yet its explicit reference to particular affective conditions (spoken and unspoken) addresses the habitually separated issues of 'justice' and 'private pain' in the terrain of collective speech, thought, and action as an alternative to notions of the public sphere that rely on what is said and what

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<sup>336</sup> Paulo Freire, *Education for a Critical Consciousness* (London: Continuum, 1974), 40.

appears in public. Isabell Lorey suggests that there is a 'virtuosity [in] acting together' which articulates a form of freedom that comes before the 'free will' of the sovereign subject, an idea that is also born out of insecurity, vulnerability, and oppression.<sup>337</sup> In the mechanisms of the unseen, the affective and atmospheric become increasingly significant. In the practices discussed in the last chapters and in relation to the public sphere more generally, politics is understood to be deliberation in public. Yet if the speech acts through which sovereign subjects articulate themselves are re-framed in terms of the less apparent registers of affect, and offered instead as part of the living matrix of collective articulation, a different assemblage of speaking and listening comes into being.

Drawing from the passage with which this section begins, it is clear that tensions between the affective or intensive plane of politics (the call to friendship) and those which easily register within its more representable and visible functions (for example, the call to work with MPs), play a significant role in neo-liberal dynamics of subjectivation. Virno suggests that precarity, insecurity and vulnerability are regularly mobilised to propel a proliferation of virtuosic and 'connective' communication. Here, affects are the fuel of idle talk, of conventions of speaking and performing. In Brian's call to avoid talking about racism to avoid antagonism, we read the degree to which well-crafted performances are required to access the attention of the realm of representational politics. In the popular education of Freire, however, affects are not seen as propellents but as motivators. It is important to note that Freire's attention to the affective orientation of dialogue is less concerned with the orientation of the speakers, or those who 'giving an [impressive] account of themselves',<sup>338</sup> through passionate pleas, than with the hands of the interpreters qua listeners, who express affective conditions in their orientation to what is heard and what can be acted upon. From this emphasis on the interpreter (or listener) it is possible to infer an intervention into the affective logic of the virtuoso insofar as the affects of love, empathy, and commitment are understood as material that hold the fabric of groups together in th

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<sup>337</sup> Lorey, *State of Insecurity*, 129.

<sup>338</sup> This quotation refers to Couldry's discussion of Judith's Butler's concept of 'giving an account of oneself' in Couldry, *Why Voice Matters*, 1.

### 3.3.1 **Feel-Thinking: On the Affective Volition of Groups**

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There are significant resonances between Freire's matrix of affects and what Vygotsky describes as the 'affective-volitional tendency'. This is an affective orientation that enables a more complex understanding of another's thought, and therefore of their language-use within the act of interpretation. 'It is not sufficient to understand his [the other's] thought, nor his words' says Vygotsky '... we must also know [the other's] motivation.'<sup>339</sup> In Freire, this dimension of the affective motivation is also understood as material in the production of dialogue.

Amongst the affective vocabulary that Freire and other popular educators attempt to mobilise, love, in particular, is a recurring theme. Love is not only about realizing the 'true word' or engaging in true dialogue, but as Guevara once suggested, a central attribute of a revolutionary orientation. 'Love', says Freire, is 'at the same time the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself.'<sup>340</sup> It is a material within the dialogic process, which is also the reason why we take part, why we listen. The love to which Freire refers is not the love of sentimentality nor of manipulation, and nor does it have a particular object in mind. It is, rather born of a commitment to the production of collective freedom. And this love can be ascertained, listened for, and interpreted alongside the more representational aspects of group work.

Approaches to love also mark the difference between the connective sensibility of the generalised theme in collective praxis and that of the conjunctive sensibility of 'becoming other'. As Franco Berardi suggests, 'Love changes the lover and a combination of a-signifying signs gives rise to the emergence of a meaning that does not exist prior to it.'<sup>341</sup>

Among popular education workbooks the affective dimension of the group manifests in very practicable ways. They state within their objectives, the 'analysis, feeling and possibilities for

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<sup>339</sup> Vygotsky, 'Thinking and Speaking,' 252.

<sup>340</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 70.

<sup>341</sup> Franco Berardi, *After the Future* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2011), 30.

action' within groups.<sup>342</sup> Activities are developed with the dual pre-occupations of moving thought towards that which is actionable; towards the possible as well as towards the intensification of this 'feeling' of the affective dimension of the group. For example, 'song building' is a recurring activity that both allows for the discussion or synthesis of an issue through the production of group affects like laughter, and through exploring the group as a body.<sup>343</sup>

Groups generally include facilitators and notetakers, who might further the more representational side of a group's work; they can also include 'monitors', who check affective dimensions and the ways in which the historical configurations of sexism, racism, and colonialism manifest in the less visible and audible *micro-political* dimensions of group-work.<sup>344</sup>

For researchers who mobilised popular education within the field of Participatory Action research across the global south, the affective aspect of Freire's cycles of reflection, analysis, and action is amplified through the concept of 'Vivencia'.<sup>345</sup> 'Vivencia' denotes the lived and felt vibrancy of experience: it is that which cannot be observed but nonetheless informs research. Participatory Action Research theorist Orlando Fals Borda claims that *vivencia* within popular research production is not only a quality of experience but a capacity. He uses the term '*sentipasentes*—feel-thinkers' to refer to those who mobilise affective conditions within collective practices of collective thinking. Fals Borda suggests that popular research processes seek to transform both the material conditions but also to transform this lived quality of experience through 'sharing, sensing, feeling, and thinking'.<sup>346</sup>

In the quoted passage that frames this section, Matteo's use of the term 'unreal' produced two types of response, which signal different orientations to the limit-situation he describes. One was a more palpable mode of debate and deliberation in which sovereign subjects question, engage in discussion, and come to a solution in the terms of the present; the other response denotes an orientation towards a different kind of listening and interpretation out of which

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<sup>342</sup> Arnold and Burke, *A Popular Education Handbook*, 9.

<sup>343</sup> *ibid.*, 44.

<sup>344</sup> Barndt, *Naming the Moment: Political Analysis for Action: A Manual for Community Groups*, 32.

<sup>345</sup> Michael Glassman and Gizem Erdem, 'Participatory Action Research and Its Meanings: Vivencia, Praxis, Conscientization,' *Adult Education Quarterly*, Vol. 64, No. 3 (2014): 212

<sup>346</sup> *ibid.*: 213.

affective concerns, or *sentipasente*, bridges to questions of 'friendship', 'solidarity' and mutual aid.

This second orientation towards a different kind of listening suggests important implications for the broader rethinking of public programmes at stake in this thesis. The affective dimension or *vivencia* that surrounds popular education is clearly of a different order to the affective terrain of performances in public programming. These performances which make use of urgent questions, poetic phrasings and powerful speakers, ignore the affective and micro political dimension of those who assemble within the space-time of the programme. They do nothing to address the micro political and macro political conditions of insecurity and vulnerability that underpin many of the ideas and contexts spoken of. Suely Rolnik suggests that activations of affective and micropolitical registers crucially address 'subjectivation exactly where it becomes captive.' It thus becomes 'impossible to ignore the unease that this perverse cartography [that neo-liberalism] provokes in us.' It is through attention to this less visible register that a 'greater precision of focus is gained for an effective resistance on the macropolitical plane'.<sup>347</sup>

Attentiveness to affect and the register of the micropolitical entails rethinking the way in which language and action articulate themselves in visible, audible and affective terms. For Rolnik, the ability to mobilise the *sentipasente's* experience of unhomeliness, precarity, and insecurity, and direct it away from neo-liberal and colonial cartographies of subjectivation is precisely a question of the 'micropolitics of thinking'. As we will explore further in Chapter 4, micropolitics for Rolnik can operate in two ways: (1) 're-active micro politics' mobilises a politics of desire in dealing with the unease and insecurity that is homogeneous, identitarian, capitalistic, and 'follow[s] a moral compass'; (2) 'active' micro politics which pushes at heterogeneity and into the realm of the possible.<sup>348</sup> In the art field, she suggests, a move to the latter marks a transition (or a choice) to move away from a mere 'scenography of politics' — through which the political is used to 'justify [a] separation from reality and depoliticization'<sup>349</sup>—and towards

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<sup>347</sup> Suely Rolnik, 'The Body's Contagious Memory,' *Transversal*, 0507 (2007), <http://transform.eipcp.net/transversal/0507/rolnik/en>.

<sup>348</sup> Suely Rolnik, 'The Micropolitics of Thinking: Suggestions to Those Who Seek to Deprogram the Colonial Unconscious' (lecture, *Under the Same Sun: Art from Latin America Today*, Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY, May 8, 2015), <https://www.guggenheim.org/video/suely-rolnik-deconstructs-the-colonial-unconscious>.

<sup>349</sup> *Ibid.*

an active micro-politics that attends to the unconscious, the invisible, and the re-politicisation of subjectivities.

### 3.3.2 Affects and the Composition of Agencies

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In Freire's work, the question of affect, the unspoken, 'the feeling in the room' is present but not always amplified. Freire's intellectual formation in humanism arguably limits his account of the micropolitical dimensions activated by popular education and there can be a lack of concern in his work for the affective dimensions of his practice. However, like the militant research procedures of Ultra-red, Freire's readings are situational. Human beings are, he suggests, 'because they are in situations [...]'.<sup>350</sup> The group's affects – silences, inefficacies, frustrations, concessions, betrayals, joys, confusions, wins – are the material of the analysis as much as the images, words, paragraphs and sentences they produce in relation to their political projects in the exterior and represented world. That is, he says, 'both education and the investigation must be sympathetic activities, in the etymological sense of the world. They must consist of communication and the common experience of a reality perceived in the complexity of its constant becoming.'<sup>351</sup>

Freire's situational understanding of communication also demands a different grammar that is generated in and through the specific conditions of radical pedagogy. Popular education is not only focused on the noun, but also on 'intransitive verbs' with an 'accompanying complement'.<sup>352</sup> For Freire, communication does not simply mean the speaking of one entity to another, or the relations between subjects who speak of objects; rather it involves a dynamic relationship between subjects. In his writing, this applies to both the making of subjects as co-participants in the communicative process of dialogue and as co-investigators in the communicative process of generating themes. Since the term *communication* is freighted with liberal humanist ideas of language as a rational medium for transparent expression and participation in a democratic society, this term seems inappropriate to describe the more radical processes of expression and organization that Freire otherwise carefully articulates.

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<sup>350</sup> Freire, *Education For a Critical Consciousness*, 124.

<sup>351</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>352</sup> *ibid.*

Indeed, in the context of social and political conditions that are profoundly undemocratic, the use of such a term seems particularly problematic.

The Argentinian popular education and militant research group Colectivo Situaciones suggest instead that the practice of popular education is better understood in relation to questions of composition. For Colectivo Situaciones, composition is not simply the structuring of language or thoughts into practicable forms, but rather 'the processes of interaction, collective valorization,' and of 'productive compatibilities and understanding' that 'sketch a plane in whose interior the word does say something'.<sup>353</sup> The question of composition extends the framework of communicative action developed by Freire in specific relation to the neo-colonial aims of extension or outreach. Composition is less a consideration of the roles of individual participants in the room, such as who is a co-participant or investigator, and focuses instead on the question of how to be *with* others.

Colectivo Situaciones agree with Freire in the efficacy of departing from the situation – linking thought to everyday life and practice at its limits, but add to this the importance of composition as an aptitude for the production of new relations, or 'composition-affection'.<sup>354</sup> Composition not only organises thought and communication but 'people and resources convoked according to certain constituent relations'.<sup>355</sup> This understanding moves beyond the conventional idea of composition as a structural principle, as in the case of a musical arrangement or an essay that is composed for a particular occasion; nor does it simply refer to people assembled together through a category of identification or shared circumstance, as in Marx's formulation of class composition. Instead - following Spinoza, Deleuze and Negri - Colectivo Situaciones understand composition as a combination of capacities, possible relations and the environment for action. Composition draws its efficacy from its capacity for affecting and being affected. Power in composition lies not in the production of a 'true meaning' as in Freire but in relation to the intensity of the ties that unite, a combination of signifying and a-signifying components of group experience. Composition is, then, the material that holds people in time, space, and struggle.

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<sup>353</sup> Colectivo Situaciones, 'Something More on Research Militancy: Footnotes on Procedures and (In)Decisions,' trans. Sebastian Touza and Nate Holdren, *Ephemeria, Theory and Politics in Organisation*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (2005): 604.

<sup>354</sup> *ibid.*, 613.

<sup>355</sup> *ibid.*

### 3.4 Temporal Conditions

#### 3.4.1 From the Generalised to the Generative: the Time of the Temp

As we read in the last chapters, although the emphasis on communicative labour, and of the speaking performances of the virtuoso once offered the promise of a freer, more creative life, the demand to enact performances that are ever 'new', today represents the proliferation of individualised social anaesthesia, a generalised separation that cuts across social relations. The temporality of public programming, overly reliant on the event, is one of the ways in which over-production and social separations are habituated and learned. In doing so, cultural spaces join a multitude of processes that render life, critique, and experience 'disinterested' or 'unreal'. They become aficionados for the temporality of the 'temp', whether it be the temporary worker, the temporary event, such as the biennial or the art fair or the production of temporary encounters between people thinking about 'Politics' and 'Art'. This 'temping' conditions a series of barriers between past, present and future.

Within this temporary temporal framework, public programmes can be read as part of a 'hedged' time. Like students who must become indebted in order to obtain a professional designation; or interns who become conditioned through a series of 'indebted' occupations; or migrant workers whose protean employers collaborate with the migration police to re-structure labour according to economic ebbs and flows; or residents of social housing who must live with the slippery temporalities of a pending eviction notice, the 'temps', in this temp time, cannot imagine their future because it is already spoken for.

Orientations to the future in the form of 'the project', 'the programme' or the 'platform' are prime modes of delivery of cultural experience, dividing time into thematic units, into accumulations of events, and modes of thought through which the future is either blocked or already written (in the programme of encounters on another theme). This orientation to the future, as we learned from Virno, coincides with contemporary affective temporalities like crisis, insecurity, panic, depression, uncertainty, fear, and rush, profoundly affecting our ability to imagine possible trajectories.

In public programming, the delivery of cultural experience largely takes place through the proliferation of themes. Thematic framings of urgent questions are seen to occupy the 'real estate of time' by attending to contemporary issues, which provide platforms for their discussion and debate.<sup>356</sup> Thematic proliferation at the pace that cultural production takes place currently curtails the emergence of thought that is born of encounters with otherness, whether it is between those who are separated by current striations of the social, or the otherness derived from rubbing against a past, or a future that is unknown. In spite of many opportunities to attend conferences, hear presentations, and listen to discussions on the topics of "Art and..." without the ability to act on what has been discussed, it becomes difficult to consider what is possible in the present. As in Rosler's performance, relations to the past can often become ossified, fetishised, or re-enacted without the possibility of impacting upon the conditions of the present and the future.

In his elaboration of the temporality of the migrant worker, John Berger describes the time of the prisoner as one in which past and future are locked together in experiences of the present, in which 'events occur, things happen', but they do not enter 'life's time'.<sup>357</sup> The temporal condition that Berger describes is not dissimilar to that of public programming, even though the situations are clearly very different. The urgent political themes of public programmes, without the ability to rupture 'life's time', become what Cildo Meireles once described as 'sterile flights of fancy', rather than potent encounters, in which pasts and futures are liberated in the experience of producing an emancipatory now.<sup>358</sup>

More than a mere marketing tool for increasingly-corporate artistic products, public programming enacts the production of a set of 'disinterested', sensible procedures in time, mirroring many areas of life's production – be they temporary work contracts, the spaces of art, or even, from time to time, the spaces of political organising. In public programming, themes move quickly: they are shaped and determined by questions and issues that are deemed to be *in the air*. The naturalised appearance of particular themes carry with them particular affects, be they phrases, such as 'affective labour', titles like 'Public Alchemy', or categories such as

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<sup>356</sup> Helguera, 'Alternative Audience And Instant Time: The Public Program As An Alternative Space.'

<sup>357</sup> John Berger and Jean Mohr, *A Seventh Man* (London: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative, 1982), 63.

<sup>358</sup> Cildo Meireles, 'Artist's Writings,' in *Cildo Meireles* (London: Phaidon, 1999).

'Religion and Politics'. In this sense, they conform to the order of what Barthes' describes as the myth. In the myth, there is a reduction of meaning to the service of forms. Where the realm of meaning contains a 'whole system of values: a history, a geography, a morality, a Zoology, a Literature', the form puts 'all this richness at a distance' to become the 'accomplice of a concept'.<sup>359</sup> What is significant in the form of the myth is that the 'form does not suppress the meaning, it only impoverishes it, puts it at a distance, holds it at one's disposal'.<sup>360</sup> Myth, Barthes suggests, does not appear as part of the dialectic between language and speech, but rather as one of the 'general ideas' of an epoch. It stands in for a sense of time, and it thematises the present. As it does not evolve from direct communities of usage it appears as a naturalized or a 'given' language, it is *generalising* but not *generative* of the time in which it exists.<sup>361</sup>

By definition a theme (or *thema*, from the Latin) can mean both, 'a proposition, a subject or a deposit' or to 'set something down, to put into place'.<sup>362</sup> Themes can then equally be the basis for transmission and/or orientation and location. As we have learned from Chapter 2, themes exist as forms; they are used to package and sell experiences through various modes of identification and interest. Theme parks are the most obvious of these, in distilling themes into a time and a space, but equally the theme of 'the environment' or that of 'the urban' or of 'Art and Politics' or 'Art and Food' nestled in the appropriate drop-down menu, or marketing meme, serve as framing devices that accelerate communication and consumption, and appeal to particular groups who identify with them. 'Ah, yes, Politics', 'Ah yes, Food', 'Ah yes, Affect'. In realms of governance, like Aem's example of the citizenship test, the implications are much greater, as bureaucracies organise themselves around policy thematics such as 'religion and politics' or more concretely, 'diversity' which then becomes a base from which to administer departmental resources, to speed up communication, and to understand who to service.

Understood in pedagogical terms, themes also operate through the principle of the deposit, making use of what Freire describes as the 'banking concept of education'.<sup>363</sup> The banking

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<sup>359</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (London: Vintage, 2000), 118-119.

<sup>360</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>361</sup> Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, 30-31.

<sup>362</sup> 'Theme,' Dictionary.com, accessed September 19, 2017, <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/theming>.

<sup>363</sup> The banking concept is introduced in Chapter 2 of Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 52.

concept, according to Freire, is a uni-directional deposit of knowledge from one (the knowledged) to the other (the unknowledged). The theme is central to this deposit as it prepares the package, so to speak, for its transmission to the other. Freire was speaking specifically about classrooms of Adult Education, where themes were used to reinforce the expectations of particular regimes of production as embodied in the curriculum. In the literacy curriculum materials delivered by the state, themes such as 'traffic' or 'office life' were perceived to be important to explore despite their lack of relevance. Other, more relevant themes, like 'planting' and 'watering' indicated that state's interests in the literacy of peasant communities vis-à-vis their role in agricultural production. Neither addressed the themes they developed in classrooms of popular education, for example, the theme of the unequal distribution between themselves and landholders, or the relationship between nature and culture.

In our context of a knowledge-based economy, we can understand generalised themes as both the indicator of a content deposit, of a kind of learning, as a mode of subjectivation and as a transactional unit. The theme, as we learned in the last chapter, functions to secure an audience around particular 'urgent questions'. It suggests that addressing what is deemed urgent takes place through isolated experiences of knowledge acquisition of speaking together, which are disconnected from engagement with its conditions of production and the futurity of potential action. In this sense the theme is both a narrator and an accelerator of time, through what Franco Berardi describes as 'connective' communication, a form of communication that relies on syntactic criteria and the easy recognition of its users to communicate simply and without friction.<sup>364</sup> Connective communication leads to a 'connective sensibility' in which each element remains distinct and interacts only functionally. In this form of communication or learning, the theme operates mimetically, as a comprehensible general knowledge realm. Equally, when themes circulate without the capacity to 'become other', public programmes and their audiences can move from one topic to another with relative indifference, and in ways that allow for quick and easy mechanisms of production.

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<sup>364</sup> For Berardi, 'Connective Communication' is related to communicative forms that are oriented towards smooth, transactional communications. 'In order to connect,' he says 'segments must be compatible and open to interfacing and inter-operability.' Where conjunction is 'becoming-other,' in 'connection each element remains distinct and interacts only functionally.' Berardi, *After the Future*, 33.

In the realm of cultural production, the theme is a frame through which we proclaim our interest or disinterest and consume (or not) accordingly. While this kind of theme is not without value in bringing people together, in convening those who may or may not gain insight, information, or knowledge, it can also enforce a dual subjectivation, between identification with a theme and separation, or the inability to act upon what has been heard. To describe this separation as simply passive viewership would be too simplistic. Spectators and viewers, just like learners are always doing something. They are never simply, as Freire's banking analogy implies, 'receptacles' of information, even if they are imagined to be so by those who teach them. Hence in the case of public programming it is not simply that themes are severed from actions; it is rather that in this act of severing, a particular mode of subjectivation of the temp is re-enforced. What takes place (and time) in connective or themed production on the level of subjectivation does so through actions in time: sitting in chairs, speaking about others, listening to issues that one has no intention or motivation to act upon, learning the empty terms of the test, sitting beside others, with or without a shared interest in a problem, staging performances of urgency for money or attention, or reciting facts to adhere to a kind of citizenship that one does not understand. One can certainly understand themes both generalised but also generative of a kind of conditioning: a public pedagogy of time.

#### 3.4.2 From Theme Time to Time to the 'People's Thematic Universe': Naming the Moment

Freire suggests that there is an oppositional logic at the heart of the production of the myths of 'the given'. Epochal themes, he argues, always have a dimension that upholds the maintenance of a structure and that which seeks to change it. As tensions between the two are created, myths are generated to maintain epochal themes, to dissipate tensions and struggles, and restore their narrative order. This is customary, says Freire, within a particularly liberal middle class for whose analysis, 'in the face of a problem...would lead to the uncomfortable perception of a limit-situation...remain on the periphery of its description and resist any attempt to reach the heart of the question.'<sup>365</sup> What Freire means by the 'heart' in this sentence is the dimension of the issue that implicates the liberal middle class most deeply. Freire argues that the dynamic between epochal themes and the 'heart of the question' produces generative themes. As such the analytic struggle exists within and at the limits of the conditions it seeks to change and not in a meta-critical position that imagines itself as somehow above or outside

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<sup>365</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 85.

these conditions. This is a movement from the banking concept, in which themes are given, to what Freire describes as 'problem posing' education.

For public programmes, this movement from the general to the generative is instructive as it suggests that moments of speaking and thinking together are not so much the encounters of a 'general' public but those dedicated and implicated within the thematic discussions they have joined. Conceiving of such gatherings in this way immediately shifts the temporality from the moment of encounter, to the trajectory of investigation in which they have already been implicated. Freire's articulation of how groups might investigate 'generative themes', attempts to move from the generalised ideas of an epoch towards elaborations that are embedded in the conditions of the time and places in which they are articulated. If the point of departure for deriving a 'true' meaning for the word is the complexity of its situation in the world as it exists within the immediate conditions of production, it is through a second order of signification that a group situates its limits in relation to broader structural and epochal conditions. Freire describes this second order as the 'people's thematic universe'.<sup>366</sup>

In creating their 'thematic universe', people address the limits of their localized conditions and broader epochal contexts. Freire addresses the representational formalities that hold epochal myths in place, and suggests instead that groups that begin in a traditional teaching scenario move from classroom to the collective investigation of their 'generative themes'. In a popular education context, and in particular the mode of investigation laid out by Freire in Chapter 3 of the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the investigation group begins with the groups' perception of reality, the levels at which that reality is perceived, and their view of the world.<sup>367</sup> In this second order of signification lies the relationship between peoples' determination of limits, and their own freedom': that is the limit-situations that they encounter. Limit-situations are derived from 'limit-acts', a term which Freire borrows from Alvaro Pinto to describe those actions in the time and place where people experience the limits of 'the given' and where these limits open on to

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<sup>366</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 78.

<sup>367</sup> *ibid.*

the possible.<sup>368</sup> By embedding themes in the limits of their experience, that is the border between the possible and the impossible, they map out the context for a collective investigation in which a political literacy as the re-organisation of life, might take place.

After the articulation of a limit-situation, groups move in concentric circles, observing the situation's exteriorities – the historical and spatial circumstances that have produced it — and its inward dimensions, as limits experienced by individuals in the places and moments of their utterance — limits they would like to surpass. Themes within this growing universe are 'generative' because of their dialectical relationship with the given themes of an epoch, and themes, which emerge from experience — as an interplay between words, actions, and reflections.

Rather than convening a platform for a political theme, which can be discussed and debated within a very limited time frame, the theme in popular education is grounded in the collective processes of a becoming group. The group analyses their situation in a committed relation to the future, to acting upon their analysis.

This might be said to operate on a syntagmatic plane, often referred to as a horizontal axes, or a sequence or chain of signifiers that sketch the dynamics between the part and the whole, and thereby look for a similarity or common pattern. Where in conventional grammar the syntagmatic may take the form of a sentence, paragraph or page, in the generative process outlined by Freire and popular education organisers this syntagmatic plane takes on a number of forms operating across multiple registers.

For example, within popular education workbooks, a first step within the articulation of a generative theme is to engage in an exercise called 'The River'. Through 'The River', people in groups who have organised themselves around an issue are asked to note experiences that for them were pivotal in relation to a term or question they have gathered around. The horizontal axis of the river is temporal. Group members are asked to write their most recent experiences on the river closer to the right side of the page and more distant memories closer to the left.

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<sup>368</sup>Álvaro Borges Vieira Pinto was a Brazilian philosopher originally trained in maths. Freire referred to him as the 'Brazilian teacher'. Until the military coup he ran the Philosophy department at ISEB. After the coup, he was exiled in Yugoslavia and then Chile, where he worked with Freire. Pinto suggested that limits are not to be seen as "the impassable boundaries where possibilities end," "but as "the real boundaries where all possibilities begin." Álvaro Borges Vieira Pinto, *National Consciousness and Realism* (Rio de Janeiro: Institute Superior de Estudos Brasileiros (ISEB), 1960), 284.

They are also asked to indicate the intensity of this experience — the degree to which the moment shifted or altered their experience of the 'limit'. They do this by adding a bend or, alternatively a set of rapids or another land-form indicator. Group members are then asked to note the broader historical events that surround the moment they have experienced a limit. Here the group situates itself in relation to a limit-situation, determines whether it is common, but also explores its relation to both their experiences and those of others. Here it is possible to determine the very beginning of the analysis, and the 'fan' of other limits to which it might relate, but also to invent a common mode of subjectivation that links the limit to 'life's time'.

Where in a conventional system the syntagm operates in relation to a sequence in time, popular education activities also operate around temporal or spatial metaphors. A second activity in popular education workbooks for the purpose of generating a generative theme is described as 'The Glacier'. By using 'The Glacier', groups analyse the structure of a problem, or limit-situation. They begin with the top of the glacier, a limit-situation as experienced by one or more members of the group. As one moves down the glacier, one proceeds to focus on the historical, structural and geographical dimensions of an issue: from those that are more recent or fragile to those which are foundational and difficult to shift; and from those which are visible to those which are subterranean, or that manifest in micro-relations and the experiences of group members. For less straightforward issues, the group might do a similar activity described as the 'Social Tree,' in which multiple 'limit situations' might hang upon branches while the structural dimensions sit on the trunk and the complicated network of relations spill rhizomatically out of the bottom.<sup>369</sup>

Here we can understand the 'generative' practice of situating themes in their generative universe as two-fold. We can understand this practice as the gathering of knowledge and experience within a group to produce an action, or as an attempt to develop a sense of the

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<sup>369</sup> A description of The River can be found in Radical Education Forum, 'A Freirian Pedagogy for the ESOL Classroom,' in *Radical Education Workbook* (London: Ultra-red and the Radical Education Forum, 2012). Elaboration of the Glacier and the Social Tree are in Barndt, *Naming the Moment: Political Analysis for Action: A Manual for Community Groups* and Arnold, Barndt and Burke, *A New Weave: Popular Education in Canada and Central America*.

shared orientation to a theme, to assess its strength and develop common bonds around it, as an organisational common.

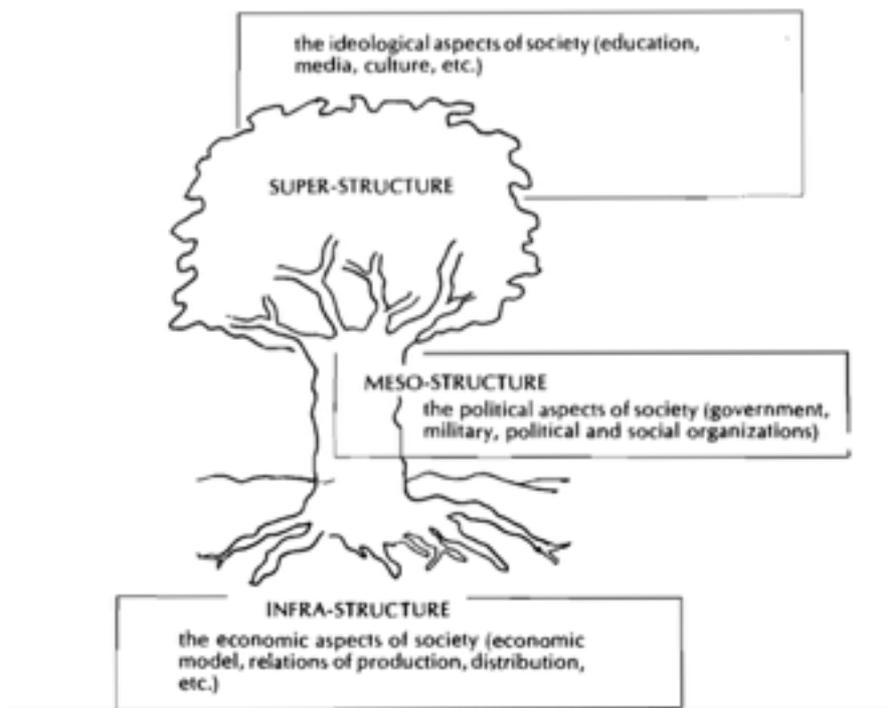


Fig 3. 7 *The Social Tree* from the popular education handbook 'Naming the Moment'.<sup>370</sup>

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<sup>370</sup> Barndt, *Naming the Moment: Political Analysis for Action: A Manual for Community Groups*, 9.

Within some popular education books, the process of generating themes is described as the practice of 'naming the moment' or 'naming the conflict'. Naming the moment draws from Antonio Gramsci's notion of 'conjunctural analysis', a process that entails elaborating limit situations through, 'the interplay of economic, political, and ideological forces at a given moment, and how one country, sector, or organization fits into the global process.'<sup>371</sup> It also draws from Freire's articulation of 'political analysis for action'<sup>372</sup> in which groups try to produce analysis of conditions and the conditions for acting upon them simultaneously. In the process of naming the moment, themes are generated not only as articulations of an issue, a *problem*, but as encounters oriented towards acting upon them.

'Naming the moment' situates the group within the struggle of the present and in dynamic interplay with the past and the future. In the words of a popular education workbook that elaborates the meaning of 'naming the moment', '...if we want to participate actively in history (and not just observe it), we have to understand the present as well as the past; we can learn to interpret history; evaluate past actions, judge present situations, and project future scenarios'.<sup>373</sup>

For public programming and its interests in the 'urgent questions' of the contemporary, this attempt to inhabit the present in a more nuanced, patient, and sophisticated way by naming and thematising the moment, addresses the enclosure of theme-time and the temporality of the temp, by both deepening the analysis of an issue but also by virtue of drawing from pasts and into the unfolding orientation towards a future. While seemingly linear, the process of thematisation is repetitive, acted upon and returned to. With every cycle, the 'investigation group', or what Freire later describes as 'culture circles',<sup>374</sup> the analysis is carried into the future of action and action into a future of further reflection and analysis.

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<sup>371</sup> Gramsci's analysis can be found in Antonio Gramsci, 'Analysis of Situations, Relations of Force,' in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York: International, 1933-34). Arnold, Barndt and Burke, *A New Weave: Popular Education in Canada and Central America*, 5.

<sup>372</sup> Barndt, *Naming the Moment: Political Analysis for Action: A Manual for Community Groups*, 9.

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>374</sup> Paulo Freire *Freire, P. (2002). Education for critical consciousness.* (New York: Continuum) 2  
182

### 3.4.3. From Time vs Space to Temporised Space

A second operation takes place within Freire's articulation of the 'thematic universe', an operation that is perhaps best understood in the semiotic terms of the paradigmatic plane. Paradigmatic planes — often described as the 'vertical axis' of semiosis operate on principles of difference or differentiation. If the syngtamatic operation of the thematic universe emerges through the practice of coming to generative themes based on common experiences, and coming to form a common experience through the thematic investigation of themes, on the paradigmatic plane, the 'thematic universe' is deepened through the movement of differentiation, a process as mentioned in earlier sections, described as 'codification and de-codification'.

In Freire's work, and popular education more generally, codifications are defined as synthesised abstractions of a limit-situation. De-codifications refer to the group's interrogation of that synthesis; their negotiation with its mode of representation and the means through which to complicate and deepen their understanding of an issue. In Chapter 3 of the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire elaborates a codification in precise terms. 'It is indispensable to proceed with the investigation by way of abstraction',<sup>375</sup> he says. Codifications may take a number of different forms, including, for instance, visual images, acoustic condensations or sound objects, performances, or comics, amongst others. It is important to emphasise that the use of these forms is provisional, and lasts only for as long as they are deemed necessary to represent an existential conundrum or limit-situation addressed by a group or one of its members. As per Freire's rather precise instructions, these codifications are presented to an investigation group by outsiders or its own members and must articulate particular limit-situations that would be familiar to those in the group. They are to be neither too obvious nor overly obscure, such that those attempting to look at them would treat them as a guessing game. They should not, he suggests, be based on slogans or stereotypes.<sup>376</sup> Freire also advises against the use of codifications that prescribe a specific train of conversation; for, as, he suggests, such prescriptive models are likely to produce only simple binaries of agreement or disagreement or inspire the staging of 'moralistic sermons'. For example, he describes a codification used within a group he worked with in Recife. This group drew on an incident on the street with a drunk man experienced by an individual group member, an incident that was also deemed to be a

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<sup>375</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 86.

<sup>376</sup> *Ibid.*, 95-96.

limit-situation for the group. As the group read, or 'de-codified' the image, they moved from their initial judgmental reflection of the man's actions to a more complex analysis of conditions of poverty and their ramifications. Had this image been presented in the binary terms of a clear moral framework, as in a slogan, Freire suggested, this more nuanced analytic passage would not have taken place.

The author of a Canadian popular education workbook<sup>377</sup> describes the codification of a table, developed by an indigenous leader in a workshop about free trade in the Americas. 'The table,' they suggest, 'became a metaphor for naming the actors and assessing their interests — it is western not an indigenous construct, brought to Canada by European settlers. In the same sense, the First Ministers' Conferences were also called and framed by the government on tables. [Indigenous] people would not have created this form of negotiations'.<sup>378</sup> In this example, the codification of the table is layered. It operates as the limit between cultures, as a tool of domination, but also an object of the quotidian and familiar; in so doing, it condenses the more visible and obvious aspects of colonial power with its more complex and everyday intimacies.

Codifications can be presented on their own or in 'thematic fans', that is as limit situations or as multiple projections auxiliary to a situation. Within the widespread adult literacy programmes developed by Freire and others in Brazil, codifications were made by artists, including Francisco Brennand. Created out of limit-situations described by the group, Brennand made a number of illustrations, which moved through the descriptions produced by the participants' collective investigations into the conditions of their lives and labour, as well as the 'culture circles that analysed them'. Developed as slide shows, it was possible to bring the analysis of

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<sup>377</sup> Barndt, *Naming the Moment: Political Analysis for Action: A Manual for Community Groups*, 42.

<sup>378</sup> *ibid.*



3.8 A

Jar of the Products of Our Labour made from Nature,  
Used in the Programa Nacional de Alfabetização (PNA), 1963  
Francisco Brennand,



*Fig 3.9: The Functioning of Culture Circles,*  
Francisco Brennand  
Used in the Programa Nacional de Alfabetização (PNA)

particular limit-situations to other communities, and to assess the relevance and differences of one community's 'themes' in relation to those of another.

Within the workbooks of popular education, a number of codification practices are described.

For example, individual or collective drawing in groups is used 'to look at what the group knows' and to ascertain the limit-situations of individuals and links between different experiences.<sup>379</sup> Where, in the practice of 'sculpturing' i.e. the production of bodily images depicting a scenario, a series of limit-situations may be played out in relation to each other. This latter mode of codification is elaborated in the Theatre of Oppressed, developed by Augusto Boal, through which groups make 'images' of the relationships between the oppressed and oppressors.<sup>380</sup>

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**Teachers' (Sculptured) View of Nicaragua**



Figure 3.10 :. Groups sculpting limit-situations within the context of Nicaragua's literacy programme. From Popular Education Handbook<sup>381</sup>

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<sup>379</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>380</sup> Arnold and Burke, *A Popular Education Handbook*, 32.

<sup>381</sup> *ibid.*

A reading by a group is what Freire describes as 'de-codification'. De-codification is the discursive processing of an abstraction by the group. In this dynamic between the making and reading of codes by groups, says Freire, what appears as a diffusely comprehended whole (the code, or abstraction), splits. By way of description and discussion, its component parts are located in the room and situated in the shared analysis of those who are present. While the process of codification and de-codification may seem familiar to anyone who has been involved in teaching the visual arts, Freire's use of this dynamic goes beyond the interpretation / evaluation functions. For him, codification and de-codification operate as a movement 'from the part to the whole, and then returning to the parts.' The point here is not, or not only, comprehension and evaluation of codes; not only call and response, but recognition, in which the 'subject recognises [themselves] in the object (the coded concrete existential situation) and recognise the object as a situation in which [they] find [themselves], together with other Subjects'. The lived reality exists in the abstract code and the abstract code is concretely re-situated and re-distributed through the processing of the group: their projections, concerns and analyses.

Situated in the dynamic of the group, the limit is expanded upon. Through the collective work of de-codification, a group develops a new list of terms, provoking how regularly discussed themes like 'integration' and 'discrimination' used by the state to support those who experience racism, often equate to top down, dis-empowering service delivery models. The theme of State or institutionalised racism is developed not only in relation to the sound or to Ad's testimony, which began as a condemnation of the British National Party, but in relation to its situation in the group. How are the dynamics of racism reflected in this group and in the organisation hosting the event?

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While these activities are relatively simple, and directed towards generating themes, or staging the grounds for an investigation, they are equally a pre-figuration of the limit or problem as a problem that is at once individual and collective. And herein lies another element of the themes 'generation', which is that the process generates a group. For Freire 'no one can say a true word alone'.<sup>382</sup> Words are generated through a group process and not by individuals who

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<sup>382</sup> Ibid., 69.

stand outside the group. It is for this reason that generative themes generate the contours of an investigation group or 'culture circles' that understand and orient themselves in relation to the process of both naming and changing the world.

The protocols established by Freire and other popular educators, adopted by Ultra-red in the example above generate *themes* as a meeting point between the individual and the group, and as a movement beyond the obvious associations and short-term modes of presentation. It is in revealing the way that a group orients around a common object, whether their reception be 'fatalistically, dynamically or statically' determined, that a group moves, Freire suggests, from their constitution as individuals to become a culture circle, and through which they form the bonds required to act together. It is also how they begin to *condition* their experience of the time and space of the present, as that which folds on to the past and the future. Through continual processes of codification and de-codification, groups deepen the generative themes and the social bonds that surround them. Generative themes are not taken from or located within individuals (as objects of research nor as subjects of their own testimony, catharsis or prescription) but exist *between* group participants.<sup>383</sup>

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<sup>383</sup> Ibid., 86-87.

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Freire suggests that by continually coding and de-coding, groups might reach the 'nuclei' with a 'complex of contradictions' that might move them towards the production of 'unperceived practicable solutions' to their problem.<sup>384</sup> While a public programme lecture on the dynamics of racism might come to the same conclusions as Karim, Maria, and others, the practice of codification and de-codification enables a more grounded relation to present conditions, which begins investigation from the collective experiences of those in the room and as such, are more inclined to act upon what has been learned.

The public in public programmes as experienced in *Dub Grammar*, is here no longer the public sphere of the virtuoso, the performer, nor the general public of middle class consumption responding to generalised themes in the generalised temporality of theme-time, but closer to what John Dewey described as the 'public of problems'. It could be argued that Freire's suggestion of a 'problem-posing' education has strong links to this notion of the public. In the public of problems the public is no longer a place (a public sphere, a platform) nor is it only the occupation of the 'real estate of time', so much as an emergence, a 'confederation of bodies', by a 'shared experience of harm' that, over time, coalesces into a "problem".<sup>385</sup>

Freire is careful not to make sweeping claims about such a public and rather to attend to the situations in which problems are synthesized, and to the blindspots that are often produced in the practice of dialectical analyses. While there is a clear connection between his broad commitment to Marx's dialectic, or the "struggle' of opposites' described by Lenin and this notion of a public constituted by and through its problems and through practices of codification/de-codification, Freire's understanding of the legacies of colonialism and their manifestation in notions of 'development' and 'progress' translated the Marxist-Leninist conception of dialectical thought in ways that address the uneven and unequal conditions of late twentieth-century Latin American societies. In colonial and neo-colonial societies, the question of who performs the synthetic operation through which a problem is articulated and for what purpose is particularly important in making sure that elite metropolitan intellectuals

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<sup>384</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 113.

<sup>385</sup> John Dewey and Melvin L. Rogers, *The Public and Its Problems: An Essay in Political Inquiry* (Penn State Press, 2012), 137.

and global neocolonialists do not make decisions on behalf of disempowered, subaltern constituencies. The use-value of oppositions such as the teacher/student relationship, the abstract/concrete, the word and the world, and indeed their synthesis in coming to 'unperceived practicable solutions' lies in their importance as practiced by the groups themselves and not those intellectuals who come to analyse their condition, however well-intentioned they might be.<sup>386</sup> That is, the analytic function should not take place at the expense of the agency or autonomy of the group participants. In this respect, Freire's approach is broadly consistent with Lenin's understanding of the dialectic insofar as neither the differences nor the syntheses achieved are absolute. The difference between codification and de-codifications and the various 'limits' they produce through 'the struggle of mutually exclusive opposites' are rather put towards a 'motion that is absolute'.<sup>387</sup> That is, the codifications are generated through an analysis of the conditions of the present, and while these codifications are grounded, they are also temporary, transitory, and can be infinitely disputed and taken apart.

This is an important point of difference from the pedagogies of 'debate' we read about in Chapter 1, which rely on 'connective' mediatised binaries that operate to smooth over the complexity of differences and to 'separate the people from the problem' through a speedy chain of understood terms. As Gayatri Spivak emphasises, Freire's problem posing notion of education and organisation 'warns us against subalternist essentialism, by reminding us that, "during the initial stages of the struggle, the oppressed . . . tend themselves to become oppressors".<sup>388</sup> In this sense the process suggested by Freire and others is neither committed to representational or identity-based practices, nor could they be described as post-representational.

Freire's emphasis on the movement between codification and de-codification pushes at the assumptions that underpin the suggestion that public programmes occupy the 'real estate of time' over the entanglements of space. Rather than accept the binary between time and space or between representational (white cube) and practices thought to be non-representational or

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<sup>386</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 113

<sup>387</sup> Vladimir Lenin, 'On The Question of Dialectics,' in *Collected Works*, 4th Edition, Volume 38, ed. Stewart Smith (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976), 357-361. <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1915/misc/x02.htm>.

<sup>388</sup> Spivak, *Righting Wrongs*, 564, quoting a passage from Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 45.

de-materialised (the black box), Freire suggests that in working through processes of codification and de-codification, or through the deepening of generative themes, groups 'temporalise space' in ways that produce what he describes as 'scope'.<sup>389</sup> Scope is the time-space that is created by groups who are both grounded in the real and represented aspects of the world and in the movement between finite temporal coordinates in the present and the infinite elaboration of the group in time. Time and space are here inseparable; they are not pitted to a set chronology but rather 'characterized by intersections of spatial and temporal indicators that make up a whole.'<sup>390</sup> The generation of a 'thematic universe' replaces the binary of time and space with the temporal-spatial trajectory, of the thematic universe. This is a significant provocation of the 'temp-time' in which themes are restricted to the event, or their performative and de-materialised discursive realm. The generation of the thematic universe in fact questions the very dichotomies between the various 'boxes' common to the articulation of mainstream cultural production, posing modes of organisation that are less concerned with the function of particular spaces or the time slots of a particular programme and more oriented towards questions of organisation, and the trajectories set up around group articulations of situated problematics. This is not to propose an alternative conception of public programmes as something that leaves the art gallery; it is rather to suggest another way of working with the representational and non-representational capacities of the public programme.

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<sup>389</sup> This notion of scope is taken by Freire by the theorist Pierre Furter, who states 'The goal will no longer be to eliminate the risks of temporality by clutching to guaranteed space, but rather to temporalise space...the universe is revealed to me not as space, imposing a massive presence to which I can but adapt, but as scope, a domain that takes shape as I act upon it.' Pierre Furter, *Education and Life* (Tierra Nueva, 1972), 26-27, as quoted in Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 73.

<sup>390</sup> Ibid.

#### 3.4.4 From Generative Themes to Generative Politics

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As opposed to the theme in the time of the temp, the temporality of the thematic universe is both temporal and spatial. The tensions between the finite (codification) and infinite (process of de-codification), within the making of generative themes, allow themes to be elaborated more fully, to rub up against others and to extend over time and to unfold onto unknown futures. This orientation towards futurity as a concrete material is a prominent feature of popular education, and one that often poses a conflict within the current temporal operations of post-Fordist labour.

If the future in the 'theme time' of the temp is often locked, either through the 'hedged' lives of those who work in the hopes of a future return on the present, for those whose futures are already indebted or for whom, through the modality of 'the programme', the future has already been inscribed or spoken for, then the temporality of the thematic universe attempts to activate futurity in the present, to highlight the stakes of the time of commitment.

Within popular education workbooks, there is, on the other hand, always the notion of 'the return'. Groups move from reflection (description of concrete situations and desires), analysis (theorisation through the generation of additional themes) to the 'return' of concrete action.<sup>391</sup> In her recollections on the work of the Highlander Folk School, an important proponent of community organising based in popular education in the United States, civil rights activist Septima Clark suggests that the question at the beginning and end of every session was, 'what are you going to do when you get back to your community?'<sup>392</sup> Equally, a technique described as 'Marcha metodologica' is used at the end of popular education workshops of the Alfora Network of popular educators in Latin America. The participants review the steps of each workshop so that all involved can translate the practices they have experienced to others in their community. In this way, they build a sense of the return into workshop modalities. For others, it is imperative that those in attendance must leave with a 'specific action plan'.<sup>393</sup> This

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<sup>391</sup> Arnold and Burke, *A Popular Education Handbook*, 12.

<sup>392</sup> Septima Clark, *Ready from Within: Septima Clark and the Civil Rights Movement*, ed. Cynthia Stokes Brown (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 1986), 30.

<sup>393</sup> Arnold, Barndt and Burke, *A New Weave: Popular Education in Canada and Central America*, 31.

emphasis on carrying forward actions plans is not simply a call to organisational efficiency but a suggestion that the condition of futurity, which is also understood as the condition of possibility of acting in response to what has emerged in the 'neighbourhood' of the theme, be actionable. For a theme to be meaningful, in other words, it should manifest in the committed practices of the 'to come'. This is not about predicting what lies ahead, but to engage in a radical planning towards the horizon of the possible with the thinking practices of the present.

The question, 'what do we want to see happen?' while seemingly simple, is one seldom asked at the end of public programmes. Like the 'end' of Maria's time with the NGO, this end is the source of confusion and bewilderment for those who commit themselves to investigating the conditions of the present.<sup>394</sup> How might public programming be a time-space in which such trajectories might be followed towards new contours of organising? In Maria's case, in the context of such a public programme, disappointment about the end of the NGO's interest in her case was converted into the energetic trajectory of collective investigation.

The notion of the return, or of continuing on provokes clear conflicts within the context of neo-liberal temporalities. It pressures the organisation of time in thematic blocks; and it asks organisations to commit to trajectories around the not-yet named issues that emerge in group processes. After more than a year of work together on our three-year project, for example, the cultural organisation who commissioned us frequently posed uncomfortable questions about the finitude of the project, 'when' they would ask gingerly, 'when do you think this project might come to an end?' But, over time, they committed themselves to the long term trajectory of support for the mutual aid structures determined by the group, by offering free meeting space and enabling them to develop programmes.

In popular education the question of 'what happens next' is not always about realising the plan but about the pre-figurative importance of planning. Planning conditions an orientation to a future based in implication and action. How are we implicated in the future of the thematic universe we have analysed?

The notion of planning is a temporal logic that is not necessarily linear insofar as the past and future are engaged in the struggles of the present. As in Arendt's articulation of the question, 'Where are we when we think?' Thinking in the context of public programming takes place in the time-space of a struggle between the past and the future. Arendt uses the figure of the boxer to personify thought as that which struggles between past and future. Time in popular

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<sup>394</sup> Arnold and Burke, *A Popular Education Handbook*, 10.

education is similarly understood in the endless repetition (or return) of the cyclical relation between reflection, analysis, and action. Moving through modes of analysis, from limit-situations, or themes, to a thematic universe, to 'practicable solutions', groups engage in the boundedness of each to another in time. Time and the struggle of knowledge production for change exists in the temporality of 'and so on...'

The temporality of generative themes in this way extends into what Spivak lays out as a 'generative politics'. A generative politics, she suggests, is 'by no means limited to the formal political sphere but spans a range of domains where political questions arise and must be responded to'. Such a politics does not necessarily depend on 'pre-given alignments' but in the trajectories and relations of trust developed through 'contingent and contextual' relations in shared practices of knowledge production.<sup>395</sup> This can be thought of as the crucial suturing of relations. Referring to her own work with radical literacy, Spivak suggests that such a politics depends on the process of generation that understands humans as beings that are 'genetically written before will' and who therefore access language as an answer to an 'outside call'. This understanding of being human as the answer to an 'outside call' forms the basis of shared practices of rights/responsibility that exceed the political sphere in the 'persistent mode of 'to come'.<sup>396</sup>

Such a generative politics can also be related to Hannah Arendt's notion of freedom. Freedom for Arendt is not the freedom of 'free will' but an idea of freedom before the will; it is a concept of freedom, which, as Isabell Lorey explains, is based in the insecurity that necessitates, the 'virtuosity of acting together'.<sup>397</sup> In this conception of freedom before the will, the subordination of virtuosity to the terms of neo-liberal conceptions of subjectivity is profoundly altered. Beginning from the shared responsibility of the 'outside call' and the non-sovereign condition of 'before the will', politics is shaped not by the delineation of a public sphere of deliberation but by practices of engaging with the question of 'what comes next?', and a commitment to the unknown contours of futurity. Considered in relation to the 'virtuosity of acting together', the movement from theme-time to thematic universe can be read as the generation of a politics that moves across but also pushes against those constrained times and

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<sup>395</sup> Spivak, *Righting Wrongs*, 563.

<sup>396</sup> *Ibid.*, 546.

<sup>397</sup> Lorey, *State of Insecurity: Government of the Precarious*, 86-87.

spaces allocated for politics and publicness to occur. In doing so, it also starts to question the spatio-temporal limits between the impossible and the possible.

Within the current field of contemporary cultural production, the question of how those working within the context of institutions respond to the call of the public of problems that exceed the temporal limits of the programme, remains unclear. In the next chapter we will look at this question in relation to the kinds of engagements with institutions made possible by the interventions of radical education, moving from the genealogy of popular education, to that of Institutional Pedagogy. In so doing we will look at processes that both think with the concrete conditions of institutions but also de-stabilise them as a frame, that highlight and strategise the plasticity of institutional relations and re-think their possibility as sites of radical preparation and change.

## Chapter 4 – Institutional Conditions: Genealogies of Institutional Pedagogy

'Indeed the interests of the oppressor lie in changing the consciousness of the oppressed, not the situation that oppresses them'<sup>398</sup> -Simone de Beauvoir –

Paolo Virno suggests that what characterises social movements, be they progressive or non-progressive, is that they rely on 'that which can be different from the way it is.'<sup>399</sup> This difference, which he also calls the 'not', is the mode of separation of people from their 'vital context'. Since language aids and abets this separation through its system of linguistic difference, it cannot be seen as a salvation or as inherently good. Language indeed could be understood to be at the heart of this separation: it can 'radicalise' this aggression through the endoxa: 'linguistic customs, that set up the grammar of life.'<sup>400</sup> As we have read in the last chapters, such 'grammars of life' can reinforce experiences of direct coercion, mobilising linguistic conventions to neutralise, re-direct, make competitive and individualise these experiences. Virno argues that we need to 'repatriate language,' to imbue it 'with a sense of pre-individual reciprocal recognition.'<sup>401</sup> This 'pre-individual' reciprocal recognition, has the capacity to produce other 'grammars of life', modes of linguistic and non-linguistic subjectivation based in commitment, responsibility, and the collective negotiation of common affairs, just as the individually-formed language of the self, has the capacity to motivate the grammars of life based in the subjectivation of the solo, virtuosic performer.<sup>402</sup> Virno's suggestion speaks to the complex scales at which 'grammars of life' are produced: from a pre-individual recognition, that is, in Spivak's words, 'genetically written before the will' but also responding to the 'call from the outside.'<sup>403</sup> This call to the outside opens up on to questions of shared analysis and responsibility, to the institutions and experiences in which the contradictions between this and our current 'grammars of life' are rendered palpable and felt, even if often unspoken.

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<sup>398</sup> Simone de Beauvoir as quoted in Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 55.

<sup>399</sup> Paolo Virno, *Between Innovation and Negation* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2008), 18.

<sup>400</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 94.

<sup>401</sup> Virno, *Between Innovation and Negation*, 18.

<sup>402</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>403</sup> Spivak, 'Righting Wrongs.'

In the last chapter, we worked through practices of thinking with conditions in popular education, which have precisely attempted to mobilise the complexities and durations of the 'grammars of life', by attending to the conditions and sites in which conditions cry out. We have seen how popular education praxes suture separations born of the subsumption of our capacities to think and act together into the productive forces of labour and neoliberal governance, and how this suturing can in turn pose problems to the current institutions and infrastructures that shape public programming. We have thus moved from a notion of public programming that is grounded in an allusion to the 'higher principles' of the public sphere, oriented around questions of dialogue, debate, speaking out and the fast-paced circulation of themes and *towards* a re-patriation/matriation of a kind of thinking that is grounded in the listening to the polyphony of conditions as they move from theme to 'thematic universe'.<sup>404</sup> This polyphony includes what is spoken, what is heard, but also the contingent practices of organisation that are more frequently associated with the private or domestic sphere, practices surrounding affect, mutual support, care, and the participation of a-signifying agencies. Such a move has also entailed a shift *from* the subject of the virtuoso, the one who speaks and performs in public, a solo figure vying for the chance to be heard and engaged in the competitive negotiation of interests, *towards* the work of the weaver, practices of composition, suturing, of bridging, and bringing together contingent aspects of organising in what Isabell Lorey describes as a 'virtuosity of acting together'.<sup>405</sup> Finally, we have moved from a general public characterised by a generalised set of issues or themes to what was described in the last chapter as a public of problems' that make use of but is not beholden to, the institutions that support public programming, in working through mechanisms for negotiating a common life.

The polyphony of thinking with conditions must address at once the conditions produced by the hosts of public programmes, those institutions that commission, house or otherwise enable them, while also attending to the 'call from the outside'. This outside consists of networks of care, mutual aid, and self-organisation, which are brought into relation through the cyclical momentum of working through limits, desires, and the forces of thinking together about conditions. This configuration of a call that answers to the problems of life worlds beyond the walls of the institutions of culture without ignoring their conditions of production, works against many of the institutional metaphors, architectures and practices operating in cultural work today. In the current conceptions of 'the institution' in the cultural field, it is regularly assumed

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<sup>405</sup> Lorey, *State of Insecurity*.

Response to sound object

I feel fear.

The sound  
is the  
dramatic  
experience  
of a man  
with a red  
Mercedes  
always looking  
over your  
shoulder  
Always  
Aware

Generated Terms

*"You don't even know me"*

Tokenism

Tokenistic value

B.M.E. (same old  
crowd)

Ignorant

Participation

Integration

Proud

Crime

Aggression

Discrimination

Original Term

Consciousness

Notes:

thought  
something  
was wrong  
with me

Why  
should

I be  
made  
conscious?

Consciousness

toward  
change?

Propose

to meet,

Share

knowledge

that one operates either within the physical and rhetorical context of galleries or museums or that one operates *outside*, in spheres of autonomous and extra-institutional practice, whether as an artist or a community group. Self-referential discussions of institutional critique, or more recently 'radical' or 'new' institutionalism, still use the metaphor of the container or the box to delineate this border and its equivalent configuration of inside worker and outside audience,

"YOU DON'T EVEN  
KNOW ME"

TOKENISM  
TOKENISTIC VALUE  
B.M.E (same old  
crowd)  
IGNORANT  
PARTICIPATION  
INTEGRATION  
PROUD  
CRIME  
AGGRESSION  
DISCRIMINATION  
HOW DO WE  
EDUCATE?  
GO BACK TO  
YOUR OWN COUNTRY

Why  
should  
I be  
made  
conscious?  
Consciousness  
toward  
change?  
Propose  
to meet,  
share  
knowledge

I feel fear.  
The sound  
is the  
dramatic  
experience  
of a man  
with a red  
Mercedes  
always looking  
over your  
shoulder  
Always  
Aware

CONSCIOUSNESS

thought  
something  
was wrong  
with me

inside programme and outside consumer, and so on.<sup>406</sup> In this chapter I attempt to re-work this binary through the genealogy of Institutional Pedagogy and via case studies based in my work with collectives as a public programmes curator at a neighbourhood-based popular education and research centre in London, called the Centre for Possible Studies

A number of theorists over many years have also attempted to disrupt this binary configuration of the institution both within and outside of the arts. Feminist movements of the 1970s, including pamphlets like Jo Freeman's *Tyranny of Structurelessness* articulated the way in which the habits born of patriarchal institutions are reproduced in the supposed 'free' spaces of autonomous movements, regardless of their location *outside*, suggesting that particular practices de-stabilise the inside/outside configuration.<sup>407</sup> Jacques Derrida's discussion of the 'parergon' troubles the binary definition of the 'frame' of art (and by extension, one could say, its institutions), suggesting the inside is always constituted by a lack, which includes the outside.<sup>408</sup> To some extent, Pablo Helguera's call to public programming as the occupation of the 'real estate of time' over more architecturally-defined modes of presentation, can also be read as an attempt to de-stabilise spatial metaphors of inside and outside. However, as we read in the last chapter, this privileging of time over space does not disrupt the binary of the presenter who speaks for others; nor does it question the less visible containment of public programming and its themes within the confines of a temporal frame that cannot attend to the conditions that it speaks of, or that arise.

Against the conventional idea of the institution as a structure with a set of limits, Félix Guattari describes the institution as a 'modelling clay' that can be constantly made and re-made by the

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<sup>406</sup> One can read this in the more canonical reflections on institutional critique offered by Andrea Fraser, 'From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique,' *Artforum*, September 2005, <https://www.artforum.com/inprint/issue=200507&id=9407> ; in Claire Bishop's more recent attempts in defining a 'Radical Museology,' in which the majority of images undertaken by Dan Perjovschi (p4-8) re-inscribe the institution of a culture as a box, with insides and outsides and the narration of radicality is largely articulated through the perspectives of museum directors and curators. Claire Bishop, *Radical Museology* (Berlin: Koenig Books, 2013). This is replicated also by proponents of the 'new institutionalism, suggesting it is '...no longer the container that defines the contents as art, but the contents that determine the identity of the container.' Alex Farquharson, 'Bureaux de Change,' *Frieze*, Issue 101, September 2, 2006, <https://frieze.com/article/bureaux-de-change>.

<sup>407</sup> Jo Freeman, 'The Tyranny of Structurelessness,' *Berkley Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 17 (1972): 151-164.

<sup>408</sup> Jacques Derrida, 'The Parergon,' *October*, Vol. 9 (Summer, 1979): 4-21, The MIT Press.

multiple constituencies that exist across it.<sup>409</sup> Extending the terms of Guattari's thinking, Gerald Raunig has complicated the term 'institution' and the hermetic discussion of institutional critique in the cultural field by describing 'instituent practices' of exodus that re-organise, re-invent, and 'institute' new organisational forms within and outside of existing establishments. Instituent practices are entangled with and mobilised by 'constituent power' that runs within, beyond, and around the governmental establishments of 'constituted power' that we in the anglophone context term 'institution'. In a similar vein, a special issue of the online journal *Transversal*, edited by Raunig, traces the possibilities of the 'monstrous' and the 'monster institution'. What is meant by the monstrous in this special issue are those agencies that present 'another kind of power' — a mode of power that moves across and between institutions and political struggles as a 'machine for producing and expressing desire.'<sup>410</sup> Such a machine can 'generate a density and a series of possibilities for intellectual creativity and collective political action that will contribute to inventing another politics.'<sup>411</sup> Raunig and Stefan Nowotny in particular suggest a two-fold move in the 'monstering' of institutions: first, the 'implementation of monsters in existing institutions', and second, the creation of 'new institutions that have a monstrous quality'.<sup>412</sup>

This chapter seeks to augment the work of Guattari, Raunig, Nowotny, and others by listening to modes of thinking within and beyond the conditions set by the contexts in which public programming is presented. More specifically, the chapter considers how these modes of thinking re-shape, trouble, and 'monster' these contexts of public programming, while simultaneously attempting to generate responses to conditions that exceed their walls and discursive frames. In the last chapter I focused on modes of thinking with conditions that are drawn from the problems or urgent social questions faced by those who name and engage in the 'urgent issues' of public programmes. Chapter 3 also addressed the generalised separations conventionally produced within public programmes and the modes of subjectivation they engender. This chapter seeks to address the question of how cultural workers might re-conceptualise their roles as participants, supporters, and facilitators of such

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<sup>409</sup> Felix Guattari, *De Leros à La Borde* (Paris: Editions Lignes, 2012), 66.

<sup>410</sup> Stefan Nowotny and Gerald Raunig, 'On Police Ghosts and Multitudinous Monsters,' *Transversal*, 0508 (June 2008), <http://transversal.at/transversal/0508/nowotnyraunig/en>.

<sup>411</sup> Universidad Nómada, 'Mental Prototypes and Monster Institutions: Some Notes by Way of an Introduction,' *Transversal*, 0508 (May 2008), <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0508/universidadnomada/en>.

<sup>412</sup> Nowotny and Raunig, 'On Police Ghosts and Multitudinous Monsters.'

processes and indeed how roles might shift in this process. In so doing, it also considers how we might re-configure the practices of lying and pretending described in Chapters 1 and 2, and the ways in which these practices are currently rationalised and inhabited by cultural workers. More significantly, I am interested in how these spatially-defined roles: of insides, outsides, and their corresponding walls and auditoriums might be re-thought in order to re-configure the mechanisms through which public programmes in and outside of galleries take place.

I will explore these issues by way of another radical education genealogy: that of Institutional Pedagogy (IP) and the related field of Institutional Analysis (IA). The former is traditionally associated with institutions of education, while the latter pertains for the most part to psychiatric institutions. Institutional Pedagogy was first articulated by the French pedagogue Fernand Oury and the psychoanalyst Aida Vasquez in their book *Vers Une Pédagogie Institutionnelle* in 1958.<sup>413</sup> IP was developed in dialogue with Fernand Oury's brother, the analyst Jean Oury, Félix Guattari, and others at the La Borde clinic in France. These thinkers and practitioners worked in parallel on what they termed 'Institutional Psychotherapy' and 'Institutional Analysis.' Guattari's notion of transversality, which will be discussed later in the chapter, emerges concretely from this work and from his own pedagogical formation as a student of Fernand Oury, who he encountered in a Parisian secondary school and later in the youth caravan movement. Institutional Pedagogy refers to processes that investigate and enact institutions beyond their intended and presented activities — what another emancipatory educator, Ivan Illich, described as their 'hidden curriculum.'<sup>414</sup> In the 1950s and 60s, Institutional Pedagogy gave those who worked and studied across educational and other institutions a framework to enact and analyse conditions beyond the explicit architectures or bureaucratic (constituted) formations of institutions and their outputs. Working across the 'big architectures' of public provision such as the psychiatric clinic and the school, practitioners of Institutional Pedagogy and Institutional Analysis more widely, engaged teachers, students, parents, psychiatrists, cleaners, service users, artists, and other agents in investigating the ways in which institutions are performed, learned, taught, and altered. They engaged in active processes of experimental research on the hierarchies and daily practices that order institutions but also by breaking the walls of the institutions so that their analysis reached across

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<sup>413</sup> Fernand Oury and Aida Vasquez, *Vers Une Pédagogie Institutionnelle* (Paris: Maspero, 1967).

<sup>414</sup> Ivan Illich, *Institutional Spectrum in De-Schooling Society* (London: Penguin Books, 1976), 38-40.

relationships with families, communities, local contexts, and the political concerns of their epoch. Much of this analysis and intervention into and around the question of the institution was oriented in relation to the micro-political landscape of institutions, the fields of their enunciation that may not have registered in their observable 'productive' outputs, their mission statements or the walls that surrounded them. To understand the importance of this tradition of Institutional Pedagogy, and its relevance to the case study that forms the basis of this chapter, I provide below a detailed account of the terminology and intellectual history of Institutional Pedagogy. I look to these histories and practices of Institutional Pedagogy and Institutional Analysis to suggest new forms and horizons for public programming that mobilise and think with conditions in order to change them.

Museums, galleries, and universities have recently hosted conferences and workshops on the topic of Institutional Analysis, its intellectual genealogies, and influence on the practice of specific artists.<sup>415</sup> Yet there are very few circumstances in which one could say they have been adopted as operating concepts for cultural institutions, particularly in the Anglophone world.<sup>416</sup> Where they have been adopted in non-Anglophone contexts like Brazil, they have largely done so in the realm of public health, where cultural and 'public' programming plays an integrated role amongst many other aspects of life. Institutional Analysis often takes place in these contexts through the work of multi-faceted social centres, influenced by histories of Institutional Pedagogy and Analysis but also by the atmosphere produced through practices of

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<sup>415</sup> See: Angela Mitropoulos and Maurizio Lazzarato, *Déconnage*, 2011, video essay, *Critical Episodes 1957-2011*, MACBA Collection. The work *Déconnage* looks at the life and work of the psychiatrist Francesc Tosquelles, and his influence on the LaBorde clinic is for example, in the MACBA collection. The Scottish commissioning agency Arika, developed a public programming season based loosely on the concepts of Institutional Analysis, <http://arika.org.uk/archive/items/episode-7-we-cant-live-without-our-lives/every-little-thing>. Central St. Martin's also recently hosted a two day conference on legacies of Institutional Psychotherapy titled *Sur Analysis*, <http://www.arts.ac.uk/csm/courses/postgraduate/mres-art-theory-and-philosophy/lecture-archive/>.

<sup>416</sup> One noted exception is the work of feminist scholar and activist Laurence Rassel who, as Director of Spain's Tapies Foundation, attempted to link the work of feminist DIY hacker culture and praxes of institutional analysis into de-hierarchising an arts organisation through the use of various worker and non-worker research groups. See Laurence Rassel, 'We Were Saying What If...?'...interview by Henna Harri and Nora Sternfield, *Cumma Papers*, No. 16 (2015), Helsinki: Aalto University.

popular education in Brazil discussed in the previous chapter.<sup>417</sup> In the European context, theorists working within Institutional Pedagogy recognise an affinity between the ideas of Oury and Vasquez, and the Freinet movement before them. And yet there are few places in which their practices and ethos have been actively taken up in an arts context.

My interest in making use of this genealogy in relation to current practices of public programming is threefold. First, I am interested in the way in which theorists and practitioners of Institutional Pedagogy *think* institutions in and through the complexity of their enunciative conditions, through the multitude of their utterances, as well as through their more visible and articulated attributes. As in the contexts of popular education, enunciation in the field of Institutional Pedagogy is thought in its linguistic and non-linguistic forms as the expression of statements in word *and* world. It attends to the back room utterances, to the unregistered moments in cultural work that take place away from the main show but nonetheless shape what Spivak describes as the 'mechanics of staging', the qualitative frameworks of work and the micro political modes of subjectivation that surround public programming.<sup>418</sup> I argue that these less visible forms of enunciation are also practices which make and re-make institutions. Understanding them as such makes more apparent the ways in which neoliberal governance is embodied and performed and thus also the ways in which it can be intervened upon. Second, and following on from this, I am interested in the way in which practitioners of Institutional Pedagogy and their predecessors in radical pedagogical experimentation in France in the 1930s and 40s *think* the condition of work away from the production of products, outputs, and events, and towards the assembly of bodies and machines in the investigative production of resistant, post-capitalist realities. In our current moment, the praxes through which we negotiate our common interests have been increasingly subsumed by a labour that usurps collective thought, communicative action, and modes of speaking for capitalist value production. In the face of this subsumption, how might the trajectory of Institutional Pedagogy help to plot other conditions of possibility that circumvent the power of neoliberal regimes of affect and knowledge production? What does and could such a plotting look like as a set of

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<sup>417</sup> Information about the evolution of Institutional Analysis and Pedagogy within the Brazilian context can be read in the text of Elizabeth Maria Freire de Araújo Lima, 'For a Minor Art: Resonances between Art, Clinical Practice and Madness Nowadays,' *Interface - Comunicação, Saúde, Educação, Botucatu*, Vol. 10, No. 20 (July/Dec 2006): 317-329. Jacques Pain narrates the affinity between Institutional Pedagogy and Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* which he encountered in manuscript form in the early 1970s in Freire's literacy campaign office in San Salvador. See Jacques Pain, 'La pédagogie institutionnelle de Fernand Oury,' *CEMÉA*, 2002, [http://www.ressources-cemea-pdll.org/IMG/pdf/pi\\_rencontre\\_oury\\_pain.pdf](http://www.ressources-cemea-pdll.org/IMG/pdf/pi_rencontre_oury_pain.pdf).

<sup>418</sup> Spivak, 'Righting Wrongs.'

working processes? How can we imagine the possibilities of a post-neoliberal or post-capitalist world, while addressing the labour of organising it? If the current status of work is one that over-valorises communicative action, actively separating communication from the negotiation of the common, how can we theorise in such a way as not to replicate this condition? What are the working practices that actively articulate modes of exodus?

Many of Raunig and Nowotny's case studies through which the notions of instituent and 'monster institutions' are concretised, draw on existing networks of squatted spaces and social centres in the southern European context. In this chapter I will ground the genealogy of Institutional Pedagogy in the anglophone context where networks of 'autonomous' spaces are less substantial. In this context, these two modes of thinking with the conditions of institutions (conditions of enunciation and of work) are explored in relation to investigations undertaken in the first five years of the development of the Centre for Possible Studies in London. The Centre for Possible Studies was an off-site public programme of Serpentine Gallery in London's Edgware Road neighbourhood, of which I was the named curator between 2009 and 2014, with some elements of the programme still ongoing. The programme was originally charged by the gallery with creating a one to two year international artists' residency and public events programme, thematically focused on artists and arts programming in and about the Middle East. In fundraising documents it was suggested that this was in response to the local area's migrant community, many of whom were from the region, but it was also quite transparent at the time that such a focus would position the gallery favourably in relation to the then recent surge of art market (and art donor) interest in Middle Eastern artists. Rejecting this thematic approach, the group of gallery workers, artists, local groups, young people, self-organised activist groups and community organisers assembled through the project, morphed the programme into a study centre in which to generate 'studies of the possible' in relation to micro- and macro-political circumstances of the Edgware Road.

Over time (the original one to two year funds raised were stretched over five or six years), these studies increasingly cut across the role of the contemporary art gallery that was our host and the ways we were instituting alternative and often conflicting practices. This was not a project of institutional critique that focused on the Serpentine. Rather the 'studies' of the Centre for Possible Studies were undertaken by user groups who both analysed and intervened into a number of social and political dynamics experienced in the area. One study, undertaken by the sex worker led group x:talk, for example, researched modes of policing of migrant sex work in

the neighbourhood and elsewhere in the city, alongside providing free English classes and organising platforms for sex workers at our project space on the Edgware Road. This group worked largely invisibly, actively rejecting any involvement in the Serpentine's framing of the project. Another study, led by housing precarious and homeless people looked at questions of 'temporary occupation' including the housing of projects like ours temporarily in unused buildings and group members' own experience of active and pending eviction. Others attempted to intervene directly with gentrification projects in the local area. This approach to the 'study' was informed by modes of thinking with conditions in and through the popular education histories described in the last chapter, and as we will see, later on in this one. As such the investigators were in many cases not university trained. Studying was rather a way to intervene into the landscape of knowledge production about their problems and to produce changes in the tissue of 'the problem' and the various modes of institutionality through which it was experienced. Though the Centre hosted events, the vast majority of them were held in relation to the concerns of particular study groups, and constituted the moment in which their inquiries were opened up to other community and non-community based groups.

Maintaining this kind of work in relation to a host steeped in the production regimes of a market-driven contemporary art gallery was by no means simple. The work at the Centre for Possible Studies exercised modes of practice that were, in many ways, in direct conflict with those of the Serpentine Gallery which nonetheless held funds for the project, paid salaries and fees of staff and user groups; what is more, the cultural capital associated with the institutional 'brand' of the Serpentine helped to facilitate access to free spaces in the area, amongst other benefits for those who studied in its context. Throughout the duration of the project, it is important to emphasise that gallery administrators and management at the Serpentine were not always aware of the full dimensions of the 'studies' that were being carried out. Still, the relative autonomy afforded to the Centre for Possible Studies ran alongside the exigencies of the Serpentine; the elaboration of the worlds of migrant sex workers and homelessness in parallel to the 'temp-time' of accelerated production, manifest most poignantly in the annual platform of a discursive 'marathon' as discussed in the Introduction and Chapter 1. We attempted to keep the regimes of this kind of accelerated production, their vertical modes of organizing, their privileging of authored speech, and their swift movement through urgent thematics away from our more modest and situated attempts at emancipatory research, and modes of organising based in praxes of thinking with conditions. Nonetheless, the pressures of these regimes were all the while present.



Figure 4.1 : Pamphlet cover, made by x:talk about the policing of sex workers in the Edgware Road neighbourhood.

An effacement of this contradictory condition was neither responsible nor possible. Rather, it was our choice to collectively decode and analyse the uneasiness of trying to inhabit this contradiction. Genealogies of Institutional Pedagogy emerged as an important reference in our collective investigations. We ran a regular discussion group on popular education, IP and other radical education and research genealogies titled the People's Research Seminar. It was open to anyone working on the project or in the neighbourhood in any capacity and was oriented toward addressing the pre-occupations, the strange turnings of the stomach through which we knew the problems of our work.

Among the groups at the Centre, the techniques and definitions of institutions developed through Institutional Pedagogy were helpful in understanding how we might think the multiple dimensions of institutionality at play in ways that valorised our 'minor' attempts at emancipatory political and cultural organising without ignoring the problematics of the institution of the Serpentine, while at the same time attempting to side step the self-obsessive tendencies of institutional critique. This was an intricate dance and not always a successful one. As such the Centre for Possible Studies became a site of research and experimentation around the problems experienced by those who lived and worked in the neighbourhood, but also around particular modes of activating radical education's genealogical imaginaries in relation to our navigation of the multiple articulations of institutionality at play in the project.

Drawing from my own experiences, the ephemera and otherwise recorded discussions surrounding the project, this chapter reads the genealogical detail of Institutional Pedagogy in relation to the affinities, tensions, and disconnections that emerged through processes of putting thinking with conditions into play in the emergence of the Centre for Possible Studies. Through a number of small vignettes, I suggest that public programming, understood as a practice of thinking with conditions, draws its impetus from broader social problematics to produce a 'public of problems' discussed in Chapter 3. Yet the production of a 'public of problems' is insufficient as an end in itself. For public programming to have any effect or power in challenging its neoliberal framing, it must also develop finely tuned, transformative, and 'monsterring' practices with the sites in which public programmes take place for an indefinite period of time — that is until the institutional sites have transformed to such an extent that such practices are no longer necessary. If, as we read in the first two chapters, cultural institutions have become sites of pretending, what specific modes of thinking with and beyond current modes of institutionality might support a shift towards a more emancipatory and consequential approach?



Figure 4.2. : Top image of the first Centre for Possible Studies in a storefront off the Edgware Road.  
Bottom image of Serpentine Gallery at its annual summer exhibition private view.  
Images taken by author

#### 4.1 Conditions of Enunciation

'Blind, deaf, but terribly talkative, the institution ignores inconvenient realities.'<sup>419</sup>

Ferdinand Oury and Aida Vasquez

*It is the beginning of October. The leaves are beginning to change.*

*We, a group of artists, are working in a local secondary school, an Academy formed after the closure of Westminster Community School in West London which had, for many years, been a site of experimental pedagogy. Its teachers, committed Marxists, had, since the 1960s and possibly before, engaged students in class analysis of their conditions. Its neighbours, the Lisson Gallery, exposed them to the emergences of conceptual art, its critiques of dominant modes of subjectivation.*

*As a first gesture, we invite the students to undertake a 'text audit' of the school, to together reflect on what words we see on a walk together through the school's grounds and its award winning post-modern architecture.*

*Students note the slogan of a prominent bank, a sponsor of an upcoming sports competition, the rules of the school, its fire and evacuation procedures, inspirational quotations about the value of learning from Gandhi and Martin Luther King built into the architecture of the school, alongside business proclamations such as 'Global Entrepreneurship,' 'Communication.'* Students note the names of major corporations on the nametags of personal mentors walking through the school: Visa Europe, GlaxoSmithKline ...

*As we collect the words that surround them every day, we ask 'what messages emerge?'*

*'Learning, inspiration', say some*

*'Authority,' say others.*

*Others still shout out: 'careers'*

*And, gleaning the contradictions in what he has heard, another student, rolling his eyes, quotes back the school's motto,*

*'yeah, learning is our business'*

*There is a pause.<sup>420</sup>*

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<sup>419</sup> Quotation from Jacques Pain, 'La Pédagogie Institutionnelle de Fernand Oury,' CEMÉA, 2002, [http://www.ressources-cemea-pdll.org/IMG/pdf/pi\\_rencontre\\_oury\\_pain.pdf](http://www.ressources-cemea-pdll.org/IMG/pdf/pi_rencontre_oury_pain.pdf) (Author's translation).

<sup>420</sup> Author's Fieldwork Notes, October 2009.

I begin in a school, a space that may seem diametrically opposed to the high intellectual tone and formal register of public programmes, with their adult-oriented discursive meetings, theoretical discourses, and buzzing themes of the contemporary art world. And yet, working in school, and this school in particular, revealed most pertinently the registers through which it is possible to understand how a public of problems might begin to engage with the multiplicity of enunciative conditions that articulate the institutions of the present. The story of this school is not terribly unfamiliar in London's urban landscape. It is what is described in the UK as an 'Academy', meaning that while adhering to state curricular guidelines it has been taken over and re-organised according to the ethos of a key donor. In the case of this school, the donor was a businessman famed with bringing Coca Cola to Iraq, who has charged the school with a commitment to 'international business.' Prior to its Academisation, the school was deemed 'failing' by various measures that have become the primary justification for the Academy paradigm introduced by New Labour and now adopted as the central education policy for schools under the Conservative government. So-called failing schools legitimise the restructuring of education, largely around the performance logics of businesses, with Head Teachers re-branded as CEOs, routine busting of teachers unions and new architectural buildings that, in the case of the school in question, resemble corporate headquarters more than a place for learning.

The narrative around this particular school suggests that it offers a step up for the poor refugee young people of the local area, by virtue of an award winning architectural building (that also serves as a revenue generating sports centre in the evenings) and exposure to personal academic trainers from corporate Europe. The cynical re-working of social justice which Academy Schools have come to symbolise are built into the very architecture of this school, with quotes by Martin Luther King coinciding with large terms such as 'Enterprise', 'Global Citizenship', and 'Communication' inscribed in its walls. The communicative landscape of the academy school is perhaps more blunt than that of the contemporary art world, but its contradictions are deeply familiar.

The co-investigators from the Centre for Possible Studies involved in this particular project were a group of artists and curators. Perhaps because of an immediate recognition of the duplicities at play, one of our first exercises there was to work through the most obvious traces of our own discomfort: the school's semiotic landscape. We wanted to account for and 'audit'

the architectures it revealed, as common ground for discerning whether our environmental queasiness was also experienced by the students. We and the students with whom we had been granted permission to work, walked through the school, observing and documenting the bold statements by Martin Luther King and others, alongside the motivational messages for top corporate CEOs, the school's rules, and the bank logos strewn on signage advertising the school's upcoming sports competition that they were sponsoring.

A free discussion of what we observed mapped the semiotic coordinates provoked what Stengers describes as 'things that force thought,'<sup>421</sup> in this case, assertions about the contradictory landscape of the education sector, but also the local area, and our mutual involvement in it. The exercise prompted us to describe what it was to live and work in the area, and how the school's proclamations were very far from students' realities of intensive policing, of the threats to their homes by local developers, the double days students performed to provide child care after school while their parents worked, their role as translators for family members attempting to get UK visas, amongst others. We, facilitators involved in arts and academic institutions, described the strangeness of our role, working on social justice issues in the context of a market-driven gallery, the contradictions of cultural work — of exploitation, of spectacle, of the fight to commit to the projects we cared about. When, in the course of our conversations, a student sarcastically quoted the school's motto '*learning is our business*' in order to express his heightened sense of the contradiction, we began to unpack the 'institution', to analyse the complex nexus of its web: its architectural semiosis, its dynamics of repression and desire, its connections to other institutions (the police, the art gallery) but also through our discussions of the transformation of these relations.

From this initial encounter, we began a multi-year research project that centrally informed the rest of the work of the Centre for Possible Studies. Through a weekly seminar groups of students from the school, artists, curators, community groups and researchers involved in our project engaged collectively in the processing of relationships between institutions, education, and the neighbourhood's policies of regeneration but also the micro-fabric of our relations with one another. How would we deal with the student's desires and expectations of authority from the facilitators? What was to be done in its absence? What habitual modes of being in a group in the school (submissive, reactive, transgressive) and the art world (busy, authoring,

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<sup>421</sup> Isabelle Stengers, 'The Cosmopolitical Proposal,' in *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*, eds. Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005), 94-103.

individualised) would have to be undone? How could we come to enunciate, emphasise, analyse, and act upon them? What notion and perhaps more importantly what praxes of the institution would and could emerge through this process?

#### 4.1.1. Conditions of Enunciation in Institutional Pedagogy

Radical pedagogist Ivan Illich once suggested that what we often deem to be 'institutions' are rather incidents of organisation along a spectrum of possible organising practices ranging from the 'manipulative' to the 'convivial': with institutions that are highly regulated and complex such as Law and the School on one side, and 'institutions' that are less regulated but used to a greater degree such as sidewalks, drinking water or learning webs on the other. When we understand the Institution to be only entities such as the 'Department of Water,' he suggests, we forget all of the ways in which the entity water, might be organized. Rather than a department, water could be understood as a river, a co-operative well, a turkish bath, the pipes that clamour in the wall, a man with a bucket, or a faucet. For Illich, the great tragedy is that we read value only in the terms of institutions suggested by those on the manipulative side of the spectrum, those processes that imagine all values in a society must be 'institutionalised' through organising practices based in constraint, addiction, client-service relations and value production for capital rather than those that take place in, around, and in opposition to these mechanisms every day.<sup>422</sup>

What he is describing are the various mechanisms through which institutions are enunciated, the spaces and moments in which we might register them, not in terms of their outputs but in terms of orientations, affects, commitments and forms. Taking Illich's fluid and expanded idea of the institution as a starting point, this section considers the mechanisms through which institutions are and might be otherwise enunciated. The current configuration of public programmes exists within a context in which many aspects of its enunciation are not considered either 'institutional' or 'productive'. Uncomfortable moments at elevator doors, questions posed regarding the commitment of institutions to the issues they have staged, for example, highlight the points at which institutions recoil from the practice of thinking with conditions. Such moments also point to those modes of enunciation, which have the potential to redefine what a public programme and indeed an institution could be. The term *enunciation*

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<sup>422</sup> Illich, *Institutional Spectrum in De-Schooling Society*, 38-40.

here is therefore not used as a value statement related to the pronunciation of the various subjects within public programming in cultural institutions (she *enunciated* her point very well); rather, it is used to indicate the process through which institutions become emphasised, legible, such that the institution is not simply a backdrop, box, cube, or frame, in which public programmes take place but part of a complex of instituting procedures articulated both in response to its more visible aspects and those that are becoming. In this light, how do public programmes become less institutions of coercion and more institutions of emancipation?

My use of the term enunciation in this chapter draws on the work of Deleuze and Guattari in which they suggest a rethinking of the common understanding of the term.<sup>423</sup> For them enunciation does not come after the word, does not perform the word, but rather takes place through assemblages that might include a polyphony of thought, material, and action. Enunciation could be the moment, for example, in which an assemblage of circumstance, voice, silence, and listening, manifests in a moment of expression, or a statement that manifests a group's work. This moment, which harmonises or communicates *as something*, (coercive, emancipatory or otherwise) is what, in their terms, we might call *institution*. Enunciation is not then performed at the hands of an individual virtuoso, but through what Deleuze and Guattari describe as a 'collective assemblage of enunciation'. Like Freire's notion of problem-posing education, the notion of the collective assemblage of enunciation is a critique of Saussurean linguistics insofar as it departs from the notion that language is a constant (a ground condition), to be performed with variation by a subject, and in which the circumstances of utterance are rendered mere details.<sup>424</sup> In Deleuze and Guattari's conception, the circumstances, actions, details, and variations of context *produce* the conditions of enunciation and therefore the making of a statement. Enunciation here is performed but not by a single subject or even a collective of human subjects. Rather it is performed by multiple agencies involved in a situation. As Guattari suggests in *Schizoanalytic Cartographies*, enunciation operates as a conductor to a score in gathering disparate entities to varying outcomes. As he goes on to explain, 'an assemblage of enunciation can include multiple social voices, it equally takes on pre-personal voices, capable of bringing about aesthetic ecstasis, a mystic effusion or an ethological panic — an agoraphobic syndrome, for example — as much

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<sup>423</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 82.

<sup>424</sup> Saussure, *Third Course of Lectures on General Linguistics (1910-1911)*.

as an ethical imperative.’ Rather than ‘despotically overcode all parts of the score’, he suggests, they will be ‘looking for the collective crossing of a threshold.’<sup>425</sup>

If we extend this idea of a collective assemblage of enunciation to the conditions of contemporary public programming, we can begin to see how the multiple regimes of production, statements in and outside of the ‘main stage’ of production, architectures, and affects congregate to produce different modes of institutional enunciation both within and beyond those ‘branded’ organisations that stage cultural events. At the Centre for Possible Studies our work to *enunciate* the possibilities of a transversal institution that could work across the landscape of the school and the gallery, across the affects of working together, across the practices we constructed and the other than human entities that enabled and intervened, that was both tethered to and exceeded these ‘institutions’ was a crucial step in understanding how to also exceed the modes of institutionally-defined subjectivation. In one of our first encounters with students, for example, we noticed that some students stayed in the corner scowling, while others looked to us for approval. We asked why this was the case and began a discussion about the ways in which the ‘school’ tempered particular behaviours in relation to ‘teachers’, as we were perceived to be. At the same time, students questioned our disdain for the authoritarian position and the arts’ context’s particular ethos around ‘freedom’, given how much authority we would have to demonstrate in order to work with them to begin with. We were required to ‘institute’ another practice of being together that could both work with these sensible and affective registers of what the institution of our being together enunciated for and in the group.

Deleuze and Guattari’s conception of collective assemblages of enunciation can arguably be tied directly to their (or more so Guattari’s) engagement with Institutional Pedagogy and Institutional Psychotherapy, which offer insight into its more practicable dimensions. Within practices of Institutional Pedagogy the assemblage was not only a conceptual but also an operational modality. For IP practitioners, institutional utterances were understood as equivalent in significance to the bricks and mortar of buildings. The architectures that visibly constitute power were read alongside the less visible rules and regulations and uttered narratives of conflict and desire to suggest institutions as ‘life places’ that cut across and beyond the walls of institutional architectures. Like other projects of emancipatory education, the commitment of IP practitioners was not only to the analysis of the explicit and implicit

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<sup>425</sup> Felix Guattari, *Schizoanalytical Cartographies* (New York: Continuum, 2012), 210.

practices of subjectivation that institutions produce, but to intervention, to breaking from them, and to instituting other kinds of life practices that would radically re-shape the enunciation of non-coercive group desire.

From this perspective Oury and Vasquez argue that the institution is not only 'The institution, with a big I. Institution frozen, blocked,' but also the 'making Institutional'. ...the dimension of everyday mediation of human relations that is institutional,' the 'About ...'; the 'Why are we here?'; the 'Who does what? Or? When? How?'; and also 'the function of the space, time, places; the kind and scale of relationships appropriate at this moment and in this place. That's the Institution.'<sup>426</sup>

Most significantly perhaps, Institutional Pedagogy, read in relation to its close alliance with Institutional Psychotherapy and the migration of practices between educational and psychiatric settings, paid special attention to the micro-violences, the silences, the affective and unconscious terrains that are the material of the institution as much as its more visible features. As Fernand Oury frequently suggested, 'the unconscious is in the classroom!...' and 'it is better to understand it than to be subjected to it.'<sup>427</sup>

Fernand Oury suggests that one of the difficulties with translating the institution in its plastic form into the English-speaking context is that in the terminology of the institution used by the anti-psychiatry movement of Laing, Cooper, or sociologists like Goffman, and more broadly in lay terms, suggest that the term institution refers to a 'repressive and totalitarian definition', what in French they might term 'establishment.' For the supporters of Institutional Analysis, says Oury, the institution can be transformed into a place of confinement, but this is an intrusion into the active living, self-managed workshops, clubs, newspaper, bars, canteens, groups and collectives that he describes as 'institution'. What heals, Oury suggests, 'is not the institution but the 'institutionalization', that is to say the creative process' of making 'institutions', liberatory practices on small and large scales. Such practices are equally creative and destructive as they intersect with the 'risk of petrification and hegemony of a particular

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<sup>426</sup>Jacques Pain, 'Fernand Oury et la pédagogie institutionnelle,' in *Friends of Freinet* (1972), <http://amisdefreinet.org/pain/2008-pain-oury-encyclo.pdf>.

<sup>427</sup> Fernand Oury and Aida Vasquez, *De la Classe Coopérative... à la Pédagogie Institutionnelle*, trans. Jacques Pain (Paris: Maspéro, 1971), 34.

institution.<sup>428</sup> As such within and across the establishments of the clinic and the school, the inside and outside of establishment walls, processes of institutionalisation and de-institutionalisation are not absolute, but, as Oury and Vasquez suggest, a 'permanent revolution.'<sup>429</sup>

The institution can then be characterised and indeed *conditioned* through its various enunciations. These enunciations are both audible, heard through the performances of "Common Decisions" or "Class Acts", but also silent, existing with the dynamic ritualistic aspects of institutional life. 'The simple rule that allows ten kids to use soap without quarrelling,' said Oury and Vasquez, 'is already an institution.'<sup>430</sup> Institutions, they suggested, are the act of instituting together according to realities that are constantly changing: places, moments, functions, roles, behaviours. They also insisted that the understanding of the institution be conditioned by an agreement that 'people have to transform the organisation in order to rearrange and modify meanings', and that the constant working and re-working of practices would be the source of these modifications.<sup>431</sup>

However, the notion of the revolution here is neither abrupt, heroic, nor confrontational and nor is it reformist, in the sense of working within and accepting the limits of the system. 'We prefer to evoke the power of perennial plants that grow roots among the stones of the old walls. Happy cracks! We are in no hurry to patch up!' say Oury and Vasquez. 'We continue. Against winds and tides wordy, stubbornly, where we are, we try to change (some),... this research jeopardises the order.'<sup>432</sup>

The jeopardisation is characterised by the pull of different orientations between coercion and liberation, and between vertical horizontal modes of working:

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<sup>428</sup> *ibid*

<sup>429</sup> Fernand Oury, 'Institutions: de quoi parlons-nous?' *Institutions, Revue de Psychothérapie Institutionnelles*, No. 34 (2004): 12, [http://www.ressources-cemea-pdll.org/IMG/pdf/institutions\\_de\\_quoi\\_parlons\\_nous.pdf](http://www.ressources-cemea-pdll.org/IMG/pdf/institutions_de_quoi_parlons_nous.pdf) (Author's translation).

<sup>430</sup> Jacques Pain, 'Definition "Institutional Pedagogy",' in *Encyclopédie Universelle* (Paris: 2005), 2. [http://www.jacques-pain.fr/jacques-pain/Definition\\_IP\\_anglais.html](http://www.jacques-pain.fr/jacques-pain/Definition_IP_anglais.html).

<sup>431</sup> Sébastien Pesce, 'Institutional Pedagogy and Semiosis: Investigating the Missing Link between Peirce's Semiotics and Effective Semiotics,' *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, Vol. 43, No. 10 (2011): 1149.

<sup>432</sup> Fernand Oury, 'Institutions: de quoi parlons-nous?'

Be serious. If, as we believe there is incompatibility between the structure of the Eiffel Tower (the binary verticality of state schools) and the Atomium structure in horizontal or cross the cooperative class, our very existence is a problem: a process of permanent institutionalization — de-institutionalization will challenge the school institution. Tensions, conflicts, disruptions are expected. Defensive reactions of "our school" too. ...<sup>433</sup>

As such the engagement of groups in the work of institutionalisation, that is the work of disentangling the Institution from its framing devices, of operating otherwise with and across the establishment and its modes of repression is a work of struggle. In the case of the Institutional Pedagogy, this struggle was not to be seen as one within or only in relation to the institution of the school. Instead the school was to be seen as the place across which struggles — social, psychic, linguistic might come into contact, might find articulation in the act of exchange. As Francois Tosquelles, an early practitioner of Institutional Psychotherapy often said, 'the institutional, that great exchanger' — 'which structures the human space.'<sup>434</sup>

Central to this malleable and transversal conception of the institution is its ability to contend with the multiple scales of its articulation. Jacques Pain, a prominent historian and practitioner of IP, describes ten 'invariants' of institutional enunciation of Institutional Pedagogy. He suggests that these include in the first instance a commitment to 'social ethics'. The second, he suggests, attends to the care *for* and fostering of precarity, suggesting that precarity and vulnerability are crucial to engaging in processes of analysis that produce other notions and performances of institution, not as in the precarity of job insecurity and zero hours contracts, but the psychic precarity that results in and from changes to the dominant order.<sup>435</sup> A third invariant exists insofar as the word is dynamically linked, and dynamically iterative of the institution. Not dissimilar to Freire's conception of reading of the word and the world,<sup>436</sup> in institutional pedagogy, words take on a particular emphasis in relation to contradictions and conflicts. 'The conflict sets violence in speech, in grammar and syntax,' says Pain.<sup>437</sup> The fourth invariant of Institutional Pedagogy is that of 'being in the middle', of an environment, not an insider or outsider *per se* but one who is able to understand the way in which environments

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<sup>433</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>434</sup> These passages are taken from Pain, 'La Pédagogie Institutionnelle de Fernand Oury.'

<sup>435</sup> Jacques Pain, 'Les Invariants De La Pédagogie Institutionnelle,' in *Institutions, Revue of Institutional Psychotherapy* (Lille, 2004), 107.

<sup>436</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 15.

<sup>437</sup> Pain, 'Les Invariants De La Pédagogie Institutionnelle,' 107.

produce particular symptoms. These symptoms might include assigned roles such as curator or audience, and their various affects, but they can also be enunciative of other modes of arranging roles and agencies, which question the authority of these roles and modes of instituting. A fifth invariant exists in the praxis of what Pain describes as 'techniques'. Indeed, as the chapter proceeds to explain, Institutional Pedagogy is constructed by and through a series of techniques, from the making of collective 'mini-monographs', texts that emerge from institutional experience, that require cooperative group sessions in order to be processed, to the making of newspapers, that in themselves necessitate decision-making processes, School Councils, practices of group discussion and decision making that 'institutionalise' the group.

Here, as in Tosquelles' notion of the Institution as the 'great exchanger', the environment is made as an 'instance of mediation...a space and time, a place in which our psychic senses can circulate, in which groups can meet, move, recombine, do something else.'<sup>438</sup> This atmospheric register of enunciation is developed within the sixth invariant which is the understanding that the institution 'holds the mental apparatus', that establishments are projections of and responses to the mental and affective processes that take place in them. For example, certain kinds of organisational forms produce an 'anxiety-emotion co-efficient' which are in turn 'great multipliers or dividers of institution.'<sup>439</sup> How these affective 'co-efficients' shape institutions in ways that make people working within their environments sick or not is a matter of care for such organisational modes of enunciation. As Jean Oury suggests, 'violence is a missed meeting.'<sup>440</sup> To prevent 'violence' Institutional Pedagogists create 'well-constructed meetings,' not for the sake of efficiency, but to produce places where 'relationships can flourish' and though not always comfortable, can be imbued with respect and 'trans-subjective empathy'. This trans-subjective empathy in turn creates new lived enunciations of the institution.

The eighth invariant is that the 'subject and the institution 'live in the same house' they are co-constitutive, they live together not as subject and object but in a living relationship of making a home. What is instituted becomes a home in both the comfortable and uncomfortable sense of the term. That is not (or not only) the 'home' of bureaucratic paternalism, but the home that is created through the acts of keeping house, of making the process of institutionalisation and

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<sup>438</sup> Tosquelles paraphrased in *ibid.*, 104.

<sup>439</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>440</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 106.

de-institutionalisation. The final two invariants of Institutional Pedagogy relate to the practice of Institutional Pedagogy for those engaged with it. IP here refuses a separation between practice, training, research and other forms of knowledge production. Knowledge production in Institutional Pedagogy exceeds professional categories and does not take place as a 'closed circuit', of experts reviewing case studies, or teachers evaluating students. Its practice and research are in the field of relations produced by existential terrain and the making of new institutional forms. Thus institutions of Institutional Pedagogy are thus enunciative of other subjectivities of work, other articulations of roles within working spaces, that take place through practices of experimentation, a point with significant ramifications for the practitioners of public programming that will be taken up further in the next section. Here, and through the conditions of those who think together, knowledge is produced, 'in the cross', in the experimental shifts between enunciations that assign roles around dominant establishment qua coercive orders and those that generate calls for new knowledges.<sup>441</sup>

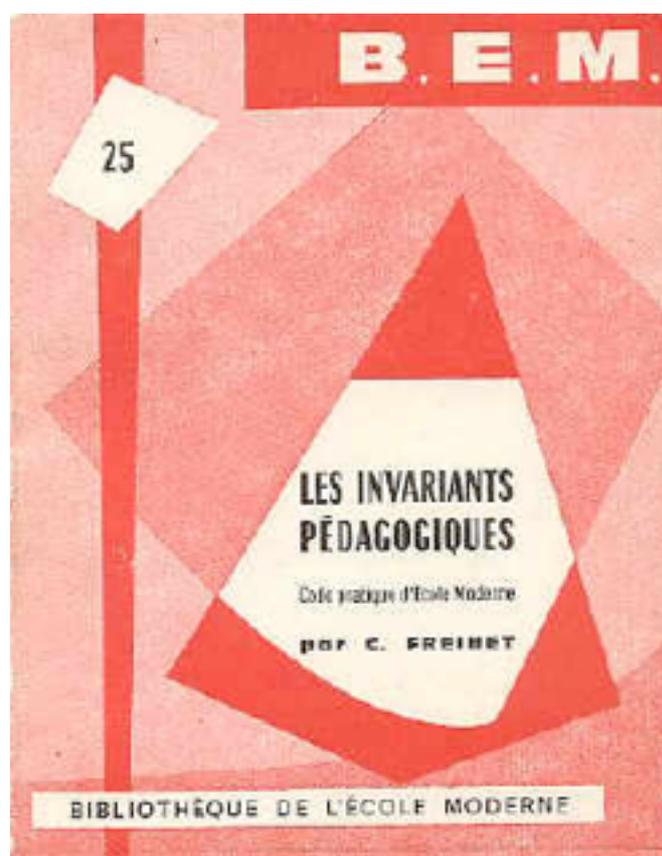


Figure 4.3: Pamphlet cover of the The Pedagogical Invariants of the Ecole Moderne by Celestin Freinet upon which Oury's 'Invariants' are derived.<sup>442</sup>

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<sup>441</sup> These invariants are paraphrased from Jacques Pain, 'Invariants. Towards an Institutional Practice in Institutions,' in *Institutions Revue de Psychothérapie Institutionnelle: Psychothérapie et pédagogie institutionnelle n°134* (Cour-Cheverny: Fédération Inter Associations Culturelles (FIAC), 1980).

<sup>442</sup> <https://www.icem-pedagogie-freinet.org/les-invariants-pedagogiques>

#### 4.1.2 Machines for Living Otherwise

A number of these 'invariants' can be traced back to the influence of the Ecole Moderne (or 'Freinet') movement in France that directly preceded Institutional Analysis and Institutional Pedagogy.<sup>443</sup> Developed by Celestine and Elise Freinet the Ecole Modern School movement began as the Secular Education Co-operative, a co-operative union for educators, initiated by the Freinets in France in the 1920s. The first Modern schools were set up in publicly funded primary schools in rural areas of France. At the centre of each school and its curriculum was a printing press which students used to produce collective language related to their lives, the life of the school, and its surroundings. Students learned to read and write by describing their environments through 'free texts' which were then written on the board by the students, if they knew how to write and if not, by the teacher. Their discussions led to a 'codification' of key issues and learning into newspaper and pamphlet form. The practice of the 'texte libre' or 'free text' resisted the convention of teaching language through phonetics. Following the work of Belgian educator Ovide Decroly,<sup>444</sup> the production of free text narratives started with the student's environment and student interest and desire for environmental transformation, rather than teaching students how to categorise words. In so doing, the practice of producing free text sought to foster an understanding of how language was shaped by conditions, instead of treating the rules of language as a fetishised system that was abstracted from its material conditions. Through this process, groups would make collective decisions about which terms resonated enough to be developed into stories for newspapers on the printing press. Other aspects of the free texts were copied by students and placed in files or in booklets on various topics for students to prepare their own lectures for classmates.<sup>445</sup> In addition to these files,

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<sup>443</sup> Nicholas Beattie, *The Freinet Movements of France, Italy and Germany 1920-2000* (Ontario: Edwin Mellon Press, 2002), 10-20

<sup>444</sup> Ovide Decroly was a Belgian turn of the century psychologist and educator who set up two experimental schools in Belgium – in which he worked with so-called 'normal' and 'mentally ill' children. He argued against dominant definitions of normality and for the importance of environment in shaping students' use of language and development of the mental, motor and affective faculties, as the basis of all their development of analytic thought. His *Questionnaire Relating to Children's Affective Reactions in the Environment Where They Habitually Live* has underpinned his wider research on the relation between environment and thinking. Against the practices of rote education, and in particular the privileging of speech in the evaluation of intelligence. He argued for multi-disciplinary intelligence and for the school to be organized around vocation and life. See Francine Dubreucq, 'Jean-Ovide Decroly (1871–1932),' *Prospects: the Quarterly Review of Comparative Education*, Vol. 23, No. 1/2 (1993): 249-275.

<sup>445</sup> Louis Legrand, 'Celestin Freinet 1896 to 1966,' *Prospects: the Quarterly Review of Comparative Education*, Vol. 23, No. 1/2 (1993).

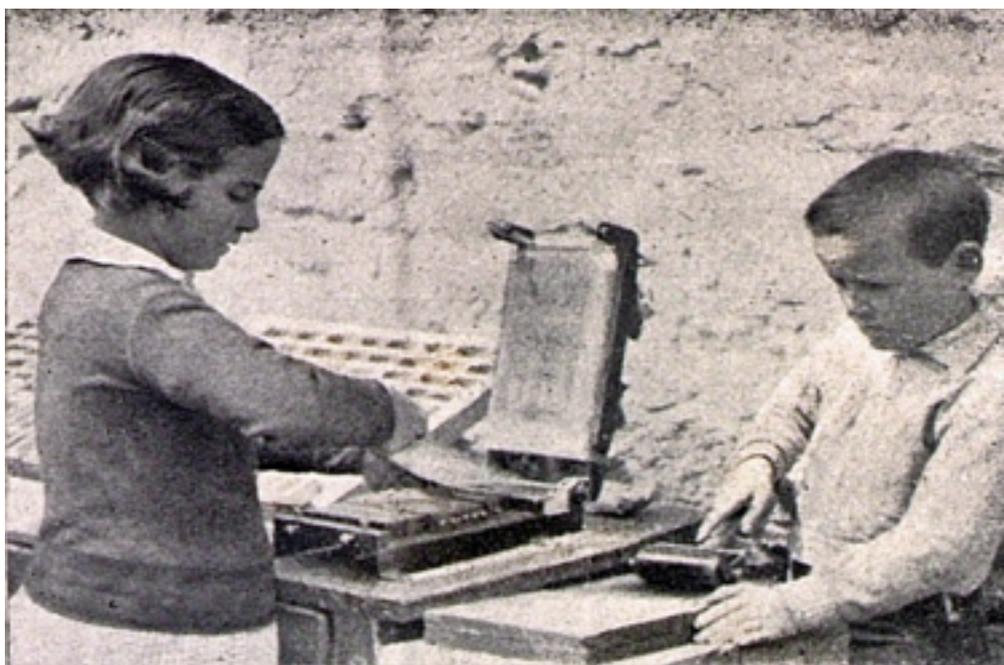


Figure 4.4 : Students composing pieces for the school newspaper out of the cards developed by their classmates. l'École Freinet de Vence, période 1936-1940) Postcard produced by ICEM (the cooperative of the Ecole Moderne Movement)<sup>446</sup>

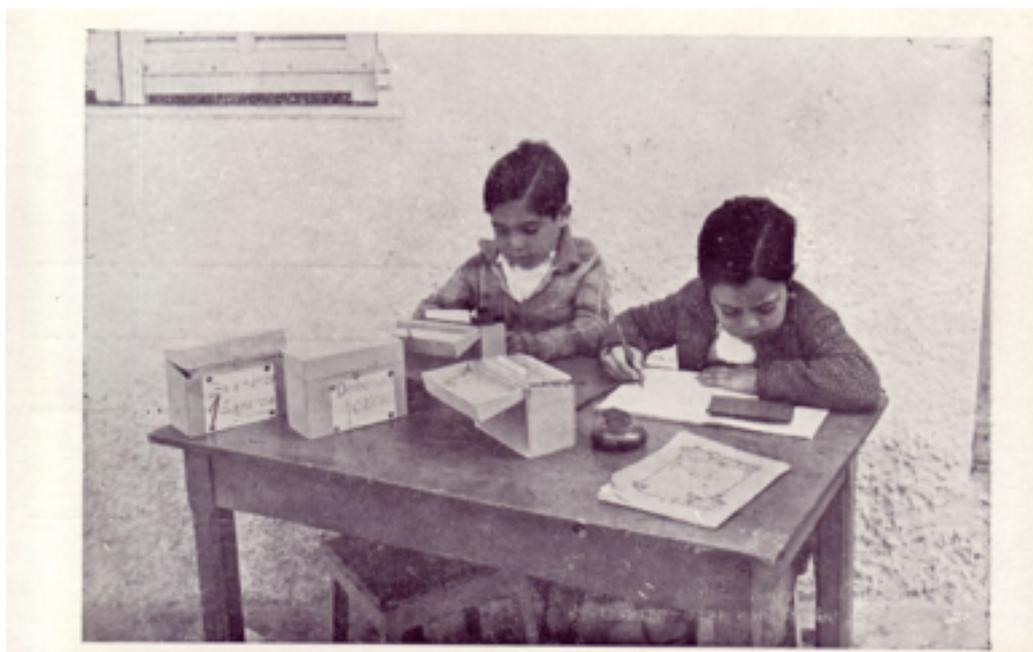


Figure 4.5 Students working through research files and the Book of Life, to locate materials for their journal publication. l'École Freinet de Vence, période 1936-1940) Postcard produced by ICEM (Cooperative of the Ecole Moderne network)<sup>447</sup>

<sup>446</sup> <http://www.histoire-passy-montblanc.fr/patrimoine-de-passy/patrimoine-civil/lenseignement-a-passy/la-methode-freinet-a-passy-et-le-journal-de-classe-face-au-mont-blanc/latelier-dimprimerie-freinet/>

<sup>447</sup> *ibid*

which contributed to an evolving school library, the students collected their published material in two books annually, one called *Book of Life* which documented students' own articulations of the work of the classroom and the other the *Book of Their Lives*, which documented their collective work.<sup>448</sup> Through the printing press, students would both materialise their relationship to the language they had produced, by literally arranging the physical letters on the press, and learning the process of moving from the articulation of their own words and worlds, to the articulation of the group. The practice of publication making by way of editorial groups called out for pragmatic mechanisms in which to make decisions collectively, and to engage in direct democratic participation. The making operational of this particular assemblage—collective-press-editorial committee—was not confined to direct engagement with the press; it also became a principle and set of practices related to how the school was organised.



4.6: Students selecting letters for the school printing press. Postcard produced by ICEM (the cooperative of the Ecole Moderne Movement) l'Ecole Freinet de Vence, période 1936-1940)<sup>449</sup>

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<sup>448</sup> Victor Acker, *The French Educator Celestin Freinet (1896-1966)* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2007), 64.

<sup>449</sup> Images available on Youtube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CAg0t29o-bE> (last accessed 20 September, 2017)

Ecole Moderne schools were developed with multiple production workshops — agricultural, culinary, academic — each of which governed by cooperative committees, all of whom feeding into School Councils. Hence they moved quite concretely from the practices necessitated by the printing press or the assemblage of the printing press-student-editorial group, to the enunciation of a number of instituting practices. In this sense the printing press was a force of institutionalisation by and through which other institutional practices became necessary. To avoid a hermetic inscription of the institution as school, an elaborate correspondence network was developed between groups in the Ecole Moderne Scholastic Exchange network. Teachers also participated in group analysis both with their students and amongst themselves. The main purpose of this group analysis was to describe their learning about the kinds of issues that emerged from the making of free texts, the use of the printing press, and the relations fostered between schools and their communities. To give a sense of scale, in the 1920s when the exchange networks were first created there were 12 participating schools. By the 1950s there were over 5000.<sup>450</sup>



Figure 4.7: Students making a composition using the school printing press in rural Northern Spain, postcard produced by the ICEM (Cooperative of the Ecole Moderne Network).

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<sup>450</sup> Images available on Youtube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CAg0t29o-bE> (last accessed 20 September, 2017)

While L'école Moderne adopted many of the emphases of other experimental early education pedagogies, the Freinets' work differed from them insofar as they were explicitly concerned with the re-distribution of power and resources in the school and society more broadly. Celestin Freinet was a committed communist with training from the Communist Education programme in revolutionary Russia. He met with Krupskaya in 1925, at a time when she was Deputy Commissar of Education in addition to being the long-term partner of Lenin. Like Freire, the Freinets were Marxists, but they also opposed the use of party dogma and the authoritarian nature of official French Communist Party pedagogy, and disagreed with one of its central tenets that students should learn the struggle through identification as working-class people within the factories (a point to which I return in the next section). Combining Bergsonian ideas of 'life force' with Marxist principles of re-distribution and alignment with working classes and poor agricultural workers, Ecole Moderne pedagogy was more interested in producing a school for the creation of transformative realities or 'techniques for living' that went beyond experiences of existing work.<sup>451</sup> It was, as such, not mechanic, but machinic in a way that prefigures the use of that term in the work of Deleuze and Guattari. For the domain of physical objects, including the press, the pamphlets, Books of Life, the library, and the exchange gave rise to collective regimes of enunciation, in linguistic and symbolic registers. This 'machinic assemblage', the term which Deleuze and Guattari use to describe the agencies of non-corporal things that give rise to new orders of the social (like the stirrup to the war) — enunciated new conditions through which students and teachers could learn to live and organise themselves otherwise.<sup>452</sup>

This move from a mechanical training in which to heighten the contradiction of class struggle in a pre-articulated sphere of work to a machinic production that was enunciative of unforeseen, yet resistant relations put the Freinets, and Celestin Freinet in particular, at odds with the French Communist party. At the same time, the Freinets' approach was also rejected by many progressive educationalists for its overt affiliation with Marxism and its focus on the group, over the individual. Celestin Freinet was, for example, arrested for his affiliation with Communism.<sup>453</sup>

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<sup>451</sup> Freinet read Bergson predominantly through the Swiss pedagogists Adolphe Ferrière, one of the founders of progressive education and of UNESCO's International Bureau of Education. Legrand, 'Celestin Freinet 1896 to 1966.'

<sup>452</sup> Discussion of the Mechanic Assemblage can be found in Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 88.

<sup>453</sup> Legrand, 'Celestin Freinet 1896 to 1966.'

And yet, despite this obvious sign of political commitment, the Communist party was also critical of his pedagogical methods, which they regarded as a form of bourgeois individualism. Such criticisms seem particularly unfortunate in hindsight, especially when one considers that Freinet explicitly linked concepts such as the 'élan vital'/'techniques for living' to radical and redistributive modes of collectivisation.<sup>454</sup> The Freinets were distinct from both progressivists and party Communist educators in their commitment to situating the Modern Schools within poor and working class areas of the country and away from the training of metropolitan elite comrades. Such an approach was another point of contention for Party comrades who believed in the apparatus of the School as it stood in urban centres. This commitment to both an outsider perspective and a machinic apparatus 'from below' was in contrast even to Modern Schools set up in both Germany and Italy, which were generally situated in urban centres.

The techniques developed by the Freinets and the Ecole Moderne networks, however, came to be extended beyond rural primary schools when adopted and adapted by both Jean Oury and his brother Fernand. Jean Oury incorporated the printing press into his work at the mental health institution at the La Borde psychiatric clinic and the latter experimented with his first 'Freinet' printing press in an urban secondary school in 1945.<sup>455</sup> Both Ourys were interested in Freinet techniques and ideas about the enunciation of institutions alongside multiple processes of group subjectivation. Fernand Oury described 'the connection between [the] individual within the class, the class within the school, [and] the school within the community.'<sup>456</sup> Such connections evolved through their involvement with Francois Tosquelles (nicknamed the 'Lacan of Institutions') and others, including Franz Fanon. Fanon had been involved in the St Alban clinic, a site of resistance against the Nazis during the war, and a space in which a number of early approaches to Institutional Psychotherapy had been formulated, as well as an approach they described as 'geo-psychiatry.'<sup>457</sup> Fernand Oury met Felix Guattari when Guattari was a teenager and a student, and Oury became his science teacher in a Paris suburb. Oury recruited Guattari into the youth hostelling movement in 1946. In this movement at the time, young people from different class backgrounds travelled in caravans, hitchhiking from hostel to hostel across Europe or on trips around the country as a pre-cursor to militant organising. In addition

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<sup>454</sup> Beattie, *The Freinet Movements of France, Italy and Germany 1920-2000*.

<sup>455</sup> Pain, 'Fernand Oury et la pédagogie institutionnelle.'

<sup>456</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>457</sup> *ibid.*

to his work in Paris schools, Oury was an organiser in this movement and began to experiment with Freinet techniques, such as newspaper production and self-management cooperatives within the context of informal education for young adults.<sup>458</sup> Also involved in the caravan movement was Fernand Deligny, who created La Grand Corde, a therapeutic caravan, a similar network for those deemed 'delinquent, pre-delinquent or emotionally challenged.'<sup>459</sup> Fernand Oury, wanting to learn more about the relationship between the printing press and the making of democratic cooperatives, undertook an internship with Freinet in 1949. In 1951 he proposed conjoining the work of Institutional Psychotherapy with the Freinet techniques in urban, upper year schools and young organising groups at the ICEM (Freinet network) conference. This elicited a vexed response from some Ecole Moderne practitioners, who felt that secondary schools would not be hospitable to the techniques due to their organisation around questions of expertise. Nevertheless, many of the groups created through this early work of Institutional Pedagogy: GET, Groupe Techniques Éducatives; CEPI, the Collective of Teams of Institutional Pedagogy (French Le Collectif des Équipes de Pédagogie Institutionnelle); and the MPI, Association for the Support of Institutional Pedagogy (Association Maintenant la Pédagogie Institutionnelle) remained aligned to the Ecole Moderne network (ICEM), until a break when in 1981 the Freinet movement took measures to court the Mitterrand government who came to power that year, and the Institutional Pedagogy group was uninterested in following suit.<sup>460</sup>

In the 1960s, the meeting point between these practices, the printing press, its precedents in the work of Russian pedagogues Krupskaya and Makarenko and its correspondences with the geo-psychiatric work of Tosquelles, Oury, Fanon and others, was explored in the journal dedicated to the work of Institutional Analysis, titled *Recherche*. Issues 3/4 and 9 of the journal (1966/69) were explicitly dedicated to education and linked the work of Lacan and Deligny to that of Freinet, Institutional Pedagogy and the emancipatory education practices of Summerhill, Makaranko and Barbiana.<sup>461</sup> Freinet's notion of the institution as the project of producing new 'techniques for living' was particularly important here. It was widely recognised

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<sup>458</sup> Gary Genosko, *Felix Guattari: A Critical Introduction* (London: Pluto Press, 2009), 27.

<sup>459</sup> *ibid.*, 28.

<sup>460</sup> Pain, 'Fernand Oury et la pédagogie institutionnelle.'

<sup>461</sup> Felix Guattari, ed., *Recherches*, No. 3/4 (April 1966), [http://www.editions-recherches.com/revue\\_detail.php?id=4](http://www.editions-recherches.com/revue_detail.php?id=4) ; Ginette Michaud, ed., *Recherches*, No. 9 (September 1969), [http://www.editions-recherches.com/revue\\_detail.php?id=9](http://www.editions-recherches.com/revue_detail.php?id=9).

in this journal that Freinet 'techniques' shifted the practices of institution towards one propellant of machinic experimentation.<sup>462</sup>

#### 4.1.3 Signifying and A-Signifying Enunciations

Many years after the effects of this machinic assemblage, the genealogy of Institutional Pedagogy nonetheless has posed a question to public programming in a similar way that it did to the institutions of the school and the clinic. That is, how do acts of thinking and speaking together, practices of mobilising urgent terms, enunciate mechanisms for working together to produce new techniques for living? If they currently serve an enunciative condition that separates 'the people from the problem', how can they begin to enunciate institutional conditions otherwise?

At the Centre for Possible Studies, drawing from both Freinet and Freire's call to the conception of the word and world together, we worked with groups to activate the 'free text' method, not to learn to read and write, but rather to set out a framework for research in the local area. For Freinet, the 'free text', understood as a technique of institutionalization, can develop in relation to a pointed activity, such as environmental walks, cooperative work in various areas of the school, or to whatever is 'in the room.' This latter technique has also been described as '*Quoi de neuf?*' or 'What's new?' *Quoi de neuf?* is a practice in which students and teachers begin each day by describing what is happening in their lives/milieu as the basis for developing core thematics. Here a group simply listens to each member describing 'what's new.' From this process, a text is written on the board. The grammar of text-board-teacher-student sets up the coordinates of a new process of enunciation institution. In one of our *Quoi de neuf?* sessions at the Centre for Possible Studies, a student brought something with her. This thing was the map of the housing blocks in the local area scheduled for demolition that she needed to translate to her parents and grandparents, who did not speak English. Will we have to leave, she asked? This question inaugurated a research trajectory, which lasted for over a year and necessitated a set of group structures for organising collective research that cut across institutions of the arts, housing, and education. The research engaged with the consultation apparatus and made significant criticisms of the local council, in addition to creating conditions for the enunciation of other ways of organising: alternative consultation mechanisms, and uses of project resources to gain access to information about the process.

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<sup>462</sup> Fernand Oury, 'Célestin Freinet disparaît,' *Recherches*, No. 3/4 (April 1966): 11-25.

Departing from our original 'free text', we generated pages of texts for the project on housing, which required that a group apparatus was put into place for making decisions, for naming our



Figure 4.8 : 'Local Shelf' of pamphlets made by groups at the Centre for Possible Studies as installed in the Church Street Library in summer, 2015. Author's photograph

research project, for engaging with our milieu, for re-organising our relationships to one another as a collective and not as a project of teachers and students. Beyond the dynamics of a group project, this attention and transition from word, to operational agencies in relation to what had been spoken, to attention to the consistency with our critique and our working dynamics .

With Freinet, says Fernand Oury, 'we speak of the 'institutionalisation' of the class.'<sup>463</sup> By this he did not mean that the class becomes a new establishment, not a new inside whose world is divorced from dynamics outside its walls; for Freinet also said 'we do not have the right to ignore the errors and injustices (of society) which affect the child beyond our (the school's) supervision and responsibility...'<sup>464</sup> In the predominant rhetoric of public programming, the word is used to explicate a condition. In the framework we developed, by contrast, the word reacts to life, and in turn produced new 'techniques for living'. 'The word does not give,' as Jacques Pain suggests, 'she takes.'<sup>465</sup>

In our practice of institutional pedagogy, the word or words of the free text can be read as a response to life rather than a structure underpinning it: a symbolic representation of its occurrences. Says Pain, 'In fact, the word [...] decomposed and recomposed the rhythm of life, it accompanies, supports it, or it is called, is based. It changes with it. The word is dressed by life and its daily dimensions.'<sup>466</sup> It is then the 'need of language' that produces its vitality.



Figure 4.9 : Free text based on a neighbourhood walk with students at Westminster Academy school, developed by the research group Public10, autumn, 2010.

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<sup>463</sup> Oury, 'Célestin Freinet disparaît,' 12.

<sup>464</sup> Célestin Freinet, *Les Invariants Pédagogiques: Code Pratique D'école Moderne* (Cannes: Editions De l'Ecole Moderne Française, 1964).

<sup>465</sup> Pain, 'Fernand Oury et la pédagogie institutionnelle.'

<sup>466</sup> Pain, 'Les Invariants De La Pédagogie Institutionnelle,' 12.

As well as addressing social issues that face those in the group, the quotidian temporality of the *Quoi de Neuf?* does something else: it allows an opportunity to encode the fantasies of group production. It is, as Pain suggests, a technique through which 'fantasy becomes word ... as agitation becomes business'. The 'institutional class' is therefore '... a place where every word can be heard (if received), precisely because this place is not anything: precise laws are observed there that allow transfers, projections, identifications, etc ...'<sup>467</sup>

This fantasy of group production came to light on another occasion of group work with students at the Centre for Possible Studies. This time, in the group *Quoi de neuf?* a number of students exposed their fear of gangs. Through our conversation, the fear of the gang was revealed as a fear imposed on students by the police presence in their school, who were regularly warning them to avoid them and/or asking them to reveal their 'gang' identifications. Through a discussion of the difference between a group and a gang, students revealed their anxieties about working outside of the school and collectively in social space. We began to speak about the various mechanisms of the 'gang' that were at play in our coming together and that produced uncertainties among us. As organisers, we were confronted by students about the framing of our coming together through which 'we' were the educators (gang leaders) and the students the 'learners' (gang members) and through which 'they' were 'dependent' on our authority, regardless of our interest in disbanding it. We recognised that we were all part of the very corporate pedagogical machine of which we were critical but was 'in the room' nonetheless. We had to think through how to work through against these 'ganging' devices that tempered our relationship even as we tried to move away from them. For students, leaving the dynamics of submission/rebellion they had developed to cope with their various repressions and violences of formal education was frightening. As cultural workers, we acknowledged that we had to work against the nagging pressure to produce something for individual careers and acclaim, to transition these desires to commit to productions of 'the possible' together.

We discussed how the institutions within and without manifested in our stomachs, the differences in desire, for critique, to make things, contribute them, to move beyond this critique into other paradigms. We had to confront our different uses of language, to try to understand the terms that we were using, each attached to the subjectivities we had cultivated.

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<sup>467</sup>Jacques Pain, 'Fernand Oury,' *Magdelaine*, [http://www.lettre-de-la-magdelaine.net/IMG/pdf/Fernand\\_Oury\\_par\\_Jacques\\_Pain.pdf](http://www.lettre-de-la-magdelaine.net/IMG/pdf/Fernand_Oury_par_Jacques_Pain.pdf).

We did this by inscribing all of our conversations, and working through the free texts that emerged through them. Collectively editing our observations gave the word 'gang' a different status, one in which we interrogated not only the imaginary produced by the police but the phantasy of our group. How do groups close in or gang themselves? How and why do they become fearful, hierarchical, or violent? Through these questions, we were moved again to revisit how these mechanisms were at play in our own process of institutionalisation. Who was taking notes in the group? How could we re-distribute the roles so that everyone took part in the process of writing and editing if they so desired, what was said? How would these processes of institutionalisation enable us to hold at once the activity of 'de-gang' our group while still analysing the social gang of public policing? How did the establishments—the gallery and the school—enter into *our* process of institutionalisation by way of their mechanisms of valuation, evaluation, and reporting? How could our enunciation of institutionalisation disfigure these monolithic and repressive enunciations without losing track of the broader question of the gang as a police fantasy conjured in the gentrification process?<sup>468</sup>

This iteration of the free text pushed our investigation to examine the word in its various dimensions—from a response to an occurrence, to the analysis of the group and its various modes of instituting, to a set of actions that could be mobilised in the group, to an engagement with its dimensions in the broader context of the neighborhood. As such it attended to different processes of subjectivation. As Oury and Vasquez suggest, where the 'free text is the word of the unconscious', the making of print and other research materials are the 'organ of the collective.' Where the blackboard (in our case the transcription of text on a projected lap top) is the 'expression of the subject', in the correspondence between schools via the exchange of newspapers and pamphlets (in our case with other neighbourhood agencies) there is the 'link with the Other'.<sup>469</sup>

This attention to the detailed process of subjectivation that is enunciative of the institution de-centres the blackboard and therefore the subject of the teacher/student dynamic as the core condition of the classroom. While not ignoring such a tension, processes are put into place to

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<sup>468</sup> Both of these processes were undertaken by myself, Amal Khalaf and students from Westminster Academy. However, in each institutionalisation process we re-named ourselves, such that the group researching housing developed their projects under the name Public10. The second group, who convened around questions of the 'gang' developed the project under the name ESVA.

<sup>469</sup> Pain, 'La Pédagogie Institutionnelle de Fernand Oury.'

alter the set of relations. The blackboard is re-framed as a site of transformation in the mechanism of producing new modes of subjectivation. 'The board may be the interface of the "Word"... but the word is not full without a further [School] Council...'470 says Pain. In so doing, he suggests that the blackboard is a site of negotiation rather than the given of a relationship. That is to say, the blackboard requires the discussion, meeting, and attending to the procedures of the group who work with it. As in the practices of popular education associated with Freire, Institutional Pedagogy requires '...the strength and commitment of an act, [which] ties the deed to the word'. It is through this process of activating the word in [a] group process that it becomes committed' as opposed to '...words [that] float on the tongue, [and which merely reinforce] the excesses of the subject and its epochs or [...] its seasons...'471



Figure 4.10 Ecole Moderne Classroom, working on the collective printing press. Postcard produced by ICEM (Cooperative of the Ecole Moderne network)

As such the practitioners of IP have an elaborate vocabulary for the process of moving from the 'daily dimensions of life' to the word, the deed, to various mechanisms of organisation that together are enunciative of institutions and their processes of subjectivation. The *Quoi de*

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470 Pain, 'Les Invariants de la Pédagogie Institutionnelle,' 10.

471 Jacques Pain, 'L'institution de la parole : de la construction de la parole à la pédagogie institutionnelle,' *CEMÉA*, 1991, <http://www.ressources-cemea-pdll.org/spip.php?article109>.

*neuf?* is understood, for example, as the context in which a word moves from the subject to the common. It is where theories begin to emerge. The 'Point Word' determines atmospheric conditions and emerging affects in a group. For example, the word 'gang' is brought up to describe discomforts both in the social context and about the work of our group at the Centre for Possible Studies. 'Shops' are the mode of expression for exploring this issue or point-word in depth; this mode may entail role playing around an issue, but could also be cooking, or doing yoga to deepen its meaning and its life within a group. In our project, the mode of expression involved the production of body images of the group to ascertain whether we were indeed a group or a gang. The 'board' or blackboard is, as previously mentioned, the transformative site in which free texts (the words of subjects) are first viewed and then morphed from individual experiences into common objects of analysis. The Board is also the site to which groups return in order to review and make decisions about how to proceed. The 'balance sheets' are the moments in which one breaks with an existing institutional paradigm in the group in order to change something. The 'last word' is that which cultivates new desires within the group.<sup>472</sup>

In this process, a problem is connected to various registers of subjectivation. In a similar way to Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the 'concept', the enunciative practices of Institutional Pedagogy create a space for thinking with conditions, which is deepened with each pass. For Deleuze and Guattari, concepts are, 'connected to problems without which they would have no meaning and which can themselves only be isolated or understood as their solution emerges.'<sup>473</sup> Unlike the floating concepts of public programmes, the concept's 'relation to a state of affairs...force intensive [non representational, difficult to grasp and contain] and extensive [representational] coordinates into spatiotemporal and energetic coordinates.' Concepts for Deleuze and Guattari exceed the times and places they have been assigned. They are not the linking of 'independent variables' but of variations across time, created 'according to the concept's neighbourhood'. A concept 'extends into infinity' and is never 'created from nothing'. A concept is infinite, able to enact co-ordinates of space and time, 'through its speed' and its opening up onto others. It is also finite 'through its contours', or the means through which it finds its shape.<sup>474</sup>

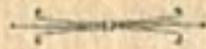
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<sup>472</sup> Pain, 'L'institution de la parole : de la construction de la parole à la pédagogie institutionnelle.'

<sup>473</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* (New York: Verso, 1994), 21-24.

<sup>474</sup> *ibid.*

*École de St-MARC DU COR (Loir-et-Cher)*



## NOTRE COOPÉRATIVE



Toutes choses qui commencent avec lenteur de-  
viennent à la fin les plus grandes.

Voilà comment se développa notre coopérative  
en 1926.

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EXTRAITS DU REGISTRE DES DELIBERATIONS  
DE LA COOPERATIVE

SÉANCE DU 6 MARS

Nous avons 300 frs en caisse. On va continuer à recueillir des abonnements au journal.

Nous cherchons comment nous y prendre: diverses propositions sont faites: envoyer des lettres, faire des affiches, envoyer deux grands voir les gens les jours de congé.

Finalement le bureau décide de se réunir à la récréation suivante pour dresser la liste des gens susceptibles de s'abonner.

Le bureau donnera une récompense à celui qui recueillera le plus d'abonnements.

Le Bureau a dressé la liste et décidé d'abandonner 0,25 à chaque abonné qui recueillera un abonnement

Figures 4.11 and 4.12 . : *Notre Cooperative* ('Our Cooperative'), 1926 made by the students of the school St. Marc de Cor, detailing the story of their attempted re-construction of the classroom as a cinema. In it the students describe their initial desire and their work to collect and sell medicinal plants to fund the cinema. Unable to raise enough money, they purchase a rabbit instead. A section of the pamphlet details the record of their deliberations and decision-making process around this and other issues, particularly to do with the sale of the subscriptions to their school newspaper.<sup>475</sup>

<sup>475</sup> <https://www.icem-pedagogie-freinet.org/node/47927>

The condition as concept here includes non-words and the a-signifying aspects of group work. Fernand Oury, for example, observed the importance of ignoring the demands of the clock and allowing some minutes to pass before beginning group sessions: 'Wait, they do not speak: they squeal; they squeak; they babble ... they make noise with their mouth'.<sup>476</sup> Jacques Pain suggests, 'gossip. this is chatter, the saying...Chatter is an important part of the process and to be learned from...'.<sup>477</sup> As in the work of popular education, non-human actors such as the board, the room, the printing press, the ways in which the chairs are organised shape the process as part of a dynamic network between corporeal and incorporeal 'bodies'. As in the last chapter, however, in order to 'hear' such a-signifying entities, one has to commit to listening to them. 'Institutions talk (speak),' says Pain, 'insofar as there exist places of listening'.<sup>478</sup>

The enunciation of the institution takes place through a process that Guattari describes as 'semiotisation.' Semiotisation convenes at the same time systems of representation and non-linguistic or a-signifying points, including words and elements such as the anxieties, sounds, machines, furniture, and technologies that inhabit a process. Semiotisation differs from speaking, which relies heavily on existing forms, forms that, as Guattari suggests, '...are not intrinsic to language, they are to be disrupted and altered by substances which attach themselves to the processes of meaning-making'.<sup>479</sup> These substances are not, as in Lacan, he argues, fully repressed in the process of signification. Like the semiotised systems of the mental health institution, language and repetitive speech or 'idle talk' can be altered by factoring a-signifying factors into the scenario of language production. For Guattari, it is only through such a-signifying and affective listened for admissions that the forms are broken. As he states, '...it often comes back to the non-linguistic components to catalyse mutations and to break the

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<sup>476</sup> Pain, 'L'institution de la parole : de la construction de la parole à la pédagogie institutionnelle.'

<sup>477</sup> Pain, 'Fernand Oury.'

<sup>478</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>479</sup> Felix Guattari, 'Semiological Subjection, Semiotic Enslavement,' in *The Guattari Reader*, ed. Gary Genosko (London: Blackwell, 1996), 145.

conformist shell of dominant language significations'.<sup>480</sup> Without such 'pertinent traits of matters of expression,'<sup>481</sup> language is rendered as mere semantics, as we saw in Chapter 2.

Semiotisation, then, produces both a world in language through a set of representational forms and a way of living or set of actions in the world that activate terms in language. For students in a school, Guattari suggests, semiotisation refers to what the students do, which might involve 'play[ing], articulat[ing] social relations, dream[ing], [or] produc[ing],' before they learn the place and time for each of these activities as they are represented in the 'normalized social field.'<sup>482</sup>

Guattari, with Deleuze, formulate their analysis of this trajectory via the work of semiotician Louis Hjelmslev. Hjelmslev expands on the structure of the signifier and signified outlined by de Saussure to suggest that signification takes place through a quadrilateral configuration that emerges from a distinction between the content (thought, concept) and expression (speech, sound). Hjelmslev understands these two categories to be in a dynamic and mutual relationship, which he describes as a 'solidarity.'<sup>483</sup> This solidarity is what produces a sign. Across each of these two planes cuts another – with which they are each in dynamic relationship: that of substance-form-purport (or sense). Both planes move from a sense or meaning—in the case of content, a conceptual impression, in the case of expression, simply a sound—through to the substance, in its psychological and conceptual dimensions, to its eventual form.<sup>484</sup> This more complicated and dynamic understanding of a semiotic process, which moves from sense to impression to form, allows for a deeper understanding of the substrata of the visual, the auditory, and their associated affects in the hierarchy of signification.<sup>485</sup> Deleuze and Guattari argue that the stratifications described by Hjelmslev allow for an expanded understanding of signification that is not only structural and through which a

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<sup>480</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>481</sup> This is a term used by Christian Merz and quoted in *ibid.*, 146.

<sup>482</sup> Felix Guattari, *Chaosmosis: an Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995), 99

<sup>483</sup> Louis Hjelmslev, *Prolegomena to a Theory of Language* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1963), 60.

<sup>484</sup> Miriam Taverniers, 'Hjelmslev's Semiotic Model of Language: An Exegesis,' preprint, submitted 2007, [http://users.ugent.be/~mtaverni/pdfs/Taverniers\\_2007\\_Hjelmslev-PP.pdf](http://users.ugent.be/~mtaverni/pdfs/Taverniers_2007_Hjelmslev-PP.pdf).

<sup>485</sup> Guattari, 'Semiological Subjection, Semiotic Enslavement,' 146.

variety of existential material can enter the signification process. Deleuze and Guattari's rethinking of semiotisation has profound and far-reaching implications for *thinking with conditions* which exists on a spectrum from the sensed to the representable.

In the space of the La Borde Clinic, where Guattari was the Activities Coordinator working alongside psychoanalyst, Jean Oury, the process of semiotisation included regular interventions within the institutional context in which mental health is delivered. La Borde was organised around the DAC – Daily Activities Commission, which met everyday after lunch to discuss all aspects of the running of the place. Turned by Guattari into 'la Grille' or 'the grid' in the 1950s, and clearly an evolution of the School Council and other cooperative methods learned through his encounters with Fernand Oury, this central aspect of institutional life was a kind of structure or rota for the distribution of tasks and responsibilities. The grid began as a collectively articulated schedule of task rotations such that hierarchies between medical staff, admin workers, patients, cleaners, cooks, interns, philosophers, artists and other outsiders were altered. 'Doctors would work as administrators, psychiatrists would do the dishes,'<sup>486</sup> Jean Oury explains. Pay was also a matter of re-distribution, with complex pay schedules attached with greater amounts allocated to the less desirable tasks. The rotating distribution of tasks enabled people to both constantly re-invent the practices of La Borde, but also to adapt modes of speaking and listening to reflect upon them. For those who were too ill to participate in large discursive group discussions, for example, a weekly 'big group meeting' was held. The big group began in silence, and its only rule was that each person must speak at a certain moment in the period. Like the 'free text' method, conversations did not have to evolve in any particular order and were described by (Jean) Oury as a 'fantastic ricochet'. While simple, this was one of the longest standing group institutionalisation processes at La Borde and in the greatest demand from those who participated.<sup>487</sup>

At La Borde, as in the genealogy of popular education in the last chapter, listening does not only refer to observation of the a-signifying conditions that are already present in a situation, but to the direct intervention and *conditioning* groups make in order to produce new terms, to provoke the necessity for other modes of interpretation and to translate alterations to language with their equivalent actions in the life world and vice versa. Another central aim of

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<sup>486</sup> Quoted in François Dosse, *Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: Intersecting Lives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 59.

<sup>487</sup> *ibid.*

the practice of Institutional Psychotherapy for Oury and Guattari was to alter 'linguistic' configurations. In this context, the linguistic did not only refer to words but to the rigid assignment of relations, roles, and practices according to the institutionally defined, professional hierarchy of a psychiatric hospital. Language was not merely an abstract system of differences; it was also a means of identifying the way in which power is distributed in order to question and negotiate its re-distribution. Roles such as insulin-distribution, doing the laundry, drawing up the menu, and creative production were redistributed in such a way that the assumed structures contributing to illness could be challenged and altered. Listening for and responding to the anxieties, affects, and silences that came from these ruptures was seen as fundamental to the analysis of the distribution of power in the production of care and, as a result to patient and social health.

In our more modest experiment at the Centre for Possible Studies, this mode of listening for the silences, awkwardness and discomforts in the predominant hierarchy of roles and relations required that we shift roles, address unspoken hierarchies, and develop a schedule of activities and rotating roles each day. These techniques were particularly important as a way to facilitate a more detailed assessment of the production of the group's analysis of the social configuration of the gang *and* the affective, silent, and hidden dimension within our ranks. There are obvious difficulties with mobilising such a self-reflective process in the context of neo-liberal establishments for whom it is the finitude of space and time that define the 'contours' of thought. For these reasons, it is therefore unsurprising that for these and other groups, our capacities to follow a line of enquiry under particular spatial and temporal constraints were met with resistance in both our claims on time and our desires to shift roles. A challenge, for example, was posed to the school's very small allocation of 'release' time for students from school curricula so that they could continue their enquiries about 'gangness' and housing in their local area. Arguments for additional funds were negotiated to literally 'buy time' for the facilitators involved to continue. Students and facilitators refused to adjudicate students in the terms set by the school and instead worked with students to develop other modes of evaluation. If the school's narration of the students' time with us was as a training into the world of work, we conducted our time together as a protest against the world of work as it is currently constituted. We asked rather, what would work look like if constructed around common pre-occupations, practices and desires? Our answers to these questions infrequently mapped on to the options available to the students or the facilitators in the conditions of the

present, but nonetheless indicated another enunciation of institution, the process of institutionalisation, required to shape new conditions of the possible.

The experience of La Borde and the Centre for Possible Studies suggest that in order to listen beyond conditions as they are given, it is necessary to intervene, to produce new conditions of enunciation. But in this 'ensemble' of techniques, organisations, methods of work, such new conditions need to be cared for. Enunciation in this new ensemble takes the form of a process of commitment to caring for the inevitable tensions and anxieties that come up in the process of institutionalisation. Rather than emphasizing and thereby valorising the proficiency of the articulate virtuoso *qua* speaking subject, enunciation requires collective action, continuity, as well as conceptual tools, pedagogical techniques, and a 'permanent facilitation' of both material and affective exchanges.<sup>488</sup>

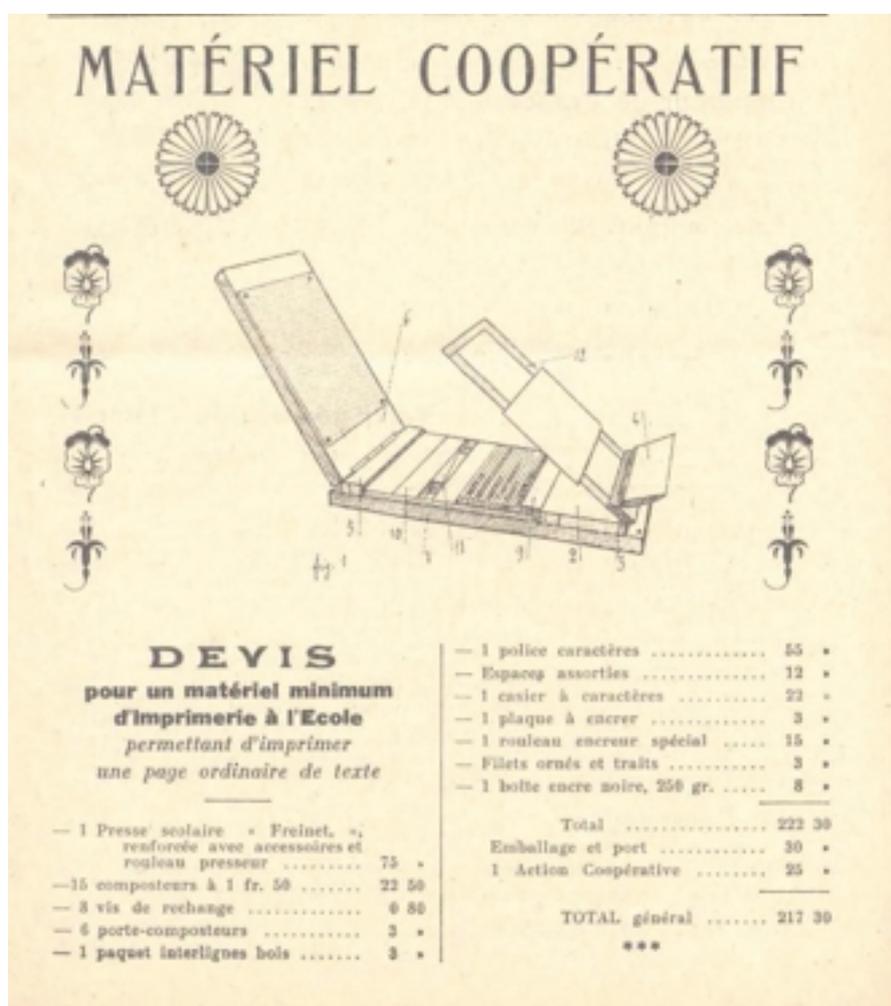


Figure 4.13 Cooperative Material, Instructions for using the school printing press (date unknown)<sup>489</sup>

<sup>488</sup> Anne-Laure Fourmont and Marc Guignard, 'Tenir Conseil au Collège?' *Le Nouvelle Educateur*, *Pédagogie Institutionnelle, Fille de la Pédagogie Freinet?*, Vol. 4, No. 22 (2015): 39-43, Institute Coopératif Ecole Moderne (ICEM).

<sup>489</sup> [https://bibliomab.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/presse\\_freinet\\_modele.jpg](https://bibliomab.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/presse_freinet_modele.jpg)

If the virtuoso who speaks is the model of post-Fordist Labour, what does such a transition mean for the workers of institutionalisation? The next section tries to clarify how this mode of processing might constitute the work of public programming differently.

## 4.2 Conditions of Work

### Scene I

*It is a Friday evening in the month of February. The Centre for Possible Studies, now in its third temporary location but arguably its most impressive, is occupying a grand, dilapidated mansion near London's Marylebone High Street. There are several rooms and several more groups using the space, as indicated by a chaotic assembly of signs on dog-eared sheets of A4 paper pinned to the wall near the entry door: 'Plan C' (arrow facing left), 'sex worker massage and know your rights (arrow facing up)', 'History of Radical Theatre in Britain (arrow facing right), 'Policing the Crisis Reading Group' (no arrow), 'Implicated' (straight through). People move silently into the building's ballroom. A spotlight shines on a two overly made up performers standing on a podium too small to hold them. They begin to give a speech, welcoming their guests. The speech is so full of pleasantries so as to not say anything at all. The guests seem bewildered. Some stare at their watches uncomfortably. Others nod as if in agreement. Others exchange uncomfortable looks. The room is surrounded by wait staff dressed in black, each carrying a tray. Half way into the speeches, a loud clanging sound interrupts and attention turns to the invisible wait staff, who have entered the centre of the room and thrown their heavy silver trays on the floor. The loud crash brings the room to an uncomfortable silence.*

*What just happened? Asks a facilitator.*

### Scene II (one month earlier later)

*It is Saturday at dusk. The Centre for Possible Studies is dark and silent. Walking up the stairs in the shadows, we hear laughter and the sounds of intense conversation. Opening the door, there is a group of huddled faces lit up from the light of a grey space heater plugged into the wall. The group surrounds the screen of a laptop computer and are debating heavily,*  
*'But if we pay for props, we cannot afford mutual aid', says one group member*  
*'But if we make a housing fund, we cannot pay wages', says another*  
*'But if we pay for posters, we cannot pay for lighting?' says a third*  
*'Is there a way to do less but pay for all of these?' asks a fourth*

If the last section looked at the conditions that enunciate institutions, this section considers the conditions of work that make up its seen and unseen architectures. I begin with these two

scenes. One is an event that attempted to publicly parody the relationship between the contemporary art field and its workers and to implicate those in the room in these dynamics. The second 'scene' takes place in a very different kind of spotlight, away from the so-called public but of equal and significant consequence, a moment in which the same group meet in the process of an open budgeting session. These scenes are related to the practice of one of the research groups of the Centre for Possible Studies titled Implicated Theatre. As a core group of the Centre, Implicated adapted strategies of popular literacy and theatre to create projects that analyze the different and overlapping issues facing the group's precarious migrant people and cultural workers. The group's name, 'Implicated', emerged through the use of Augusto Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* to create images related to working conditions (Boal's term for body tableaux) in which it became clear that Boal's formulation of oppressed/oppressor distinction did not adequately reflect the ways in which the group experienced their own power, nor that of oppressive forces.<sup>490</sup> Where is Freire's notion of the malleable figure of the oppressor discussed in the last chapter, in Augusto Boal's adaptation of Freire, there can often be an expectation that these entities - oppressor/oppressed - be distinct and oppositional. In a workshop based on contemporary conditions of post-Fordist labour experienced by members of the group, however, the oppressors of work were often portrayed with many faces, and across the members of the group, in spite of the highly precarious scenarios from which most of its members emerged. In a facilitated 'free text' session that followed the images, we tried to understand what these images meant for the work of the group. Here, the term 'Implicated', as it was translated into the many languages spoken by the group, was the word determined to name this condition. Through further discussion of the term, it emerged as important for three reasons: (1) in supporting an analysis of the ways in which we, theatre, and public programming more generally are implicated in the coercive conditions of capital, (2) it signaled a collective desire for others to be engaged in questions of implication through the theatrical pieces of the group, and (3) it defined the group's desire to be 'implicated' in each other's lives in a different way, through processes of mutual aid, solidarity, and trying to alter conditions of coercion in our lives and in the group.

While the group began this process using techniques from popular education, the issues that emerged brought together the different registers of work suggested by genealogies of Institutional Pedagogy. The work of dramatisation, of responding to issues related to the world of work, such as migrant and domestic workers working for an art gallery elite, was here met

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<sup>490</sup> Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*.

with another kind of work, a kind of life work not coded as such within the language of public programming or within the productive engines of capital, even if subsumed and made impossible by them at every turn. This other work was the work of facilitating discussion about what being *implicated* meant in the group process. What did it mean, for example, for some, as at the outset of the group's formation, to be called 'artists' and others 'participants'? What did it mean for some to have control over the resources, and others to be 'recipients'? What did it mean for some to have secure housing and others to be in hostels? And what did it mean to the group's psychic and creative life to change these roles? Scene II's open budgeting session was a frank attempt at changing the roles that frame many aspects of 'the programme'. The Implicated group's shift to open budgeting and the practice of switching roles within the group altered the very fabric of its orientation: from a performance group oriented towards a public, around the conditions of work in order to change them, to a group that based in care, collectivity, mutual aid, and other 'techniques for living'.

What is the work of this transition?

#### 4.2.1 Three Kinds of Work, Two Ways of Working

As we learned in Chapter II, the work of public programming joins a suite of other practices in producing modes of subjectivation that support and propel capital, specifically by detaching words, passions, practices of speaking and thinking collectively from the ability to act upon them. If the capacities of thinking and doing politically have been subsumed into Labour, and thus into capitalist modes of production, what does the work of wrenching them back entail exactly? And what other 'techniques of living' might be generated to do so? What precisely is the work of thinking with conditions?

The previous section considered the ways in which Institutional Pedagogy re-frames the enunciation of institutional conditions. How can we understand the making of the institution or the process of institutionalisation in terms of work? In 1964, Institutional Pedagogists defined this work in three ways. First, the work of altering institutions was materialist in a very broad sense: it was concerned with the techniques of organisation and initiating activities, the consideration of concrete situations, concrete relations and environments, and the equipment that made such practices possible. Second, it was based in 'group phenomena', that is in the making of 'groups and [the] grouping of groups and their effects.'<sup>491</sup> Groups disrupted the totalising character of the school as institution by creating other conditions of enunciation: groups could analyse, respond to, and even alter conditions. The struggle of the group was to stave off the effects of ossification, the settling in to routines and habits that were coercive and or negative for the group's health (though not necessarily for its productivity in the capitalist sense). Further to this, a third aspect to the work of Institutional Pedagogy was the work of analysis: that is, to understand how the 'unconscious is in the class.'<sup>492</sup>

Across these three kinds of work, there are issues that are effected by two registers or modes of working which are also referenced in practices of Institutional Pedagogy: the represented forms, the institutions as we can see them, as we participate in stated and administered mechanisms of production, and the 'detail' or circumstantial entities that have not yet found form. Building upon these genealogies, Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze use the terms macro

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<sup>491</sup> Fernand Oury and Aida Vasquez, *Vers Une Pédagogie Institutionnelle* (Paris: Maspero, 1967). 120

<sup>492</sup> *ibid* 134

and micro politics to describe this difference.<sup>493</sup> The latter, what they term micropolitics, is used to denote the organisational, affective, and psychic processes associated with the production of subjectivity and social relations. Drawn from Michel Foucault's work in the 1970s, they argue that all relations of power involve processes of subjectivation at their core. A micropolitical approach thus responds to the molecularisation of repression and mutations of neoliberal modes of governance. It attends to the mundane and fine details of relational encounters and the concrete ways in which they become part of wider social and political phenomena. Following Guattari, Suely Rolnik defines micropolitics as the level of the sensible, of affect and desire: the register just below perception, where planes of flows, intensities, sensations, and becomings take shape to create 'the forces that shake reality.'<sup>494</sup> She uses the term to map out a terrain of discernment where it becomes possible to name the disjuncture between the use of critical nomenclature and the concrete conditions that block this criticality from taking effect.

Micropolitics are then not simply *small* politics, minor events or instances of 'non-institutional' politics from those outside; rather, they are the formulations that are generated, in the modes of thinking and becoming that come about in the act of desiring together. They disrupt macropolitical terrains. They do so because they are fundamentally at odds; they define a different way of knowing from the realm of representation. Where micropolitical ways of knowing are derived from desire, the 'forces that shake reality', macropolitical knowledge comes from the formal and strategic operations of power: those operations that condition representation. Therefore while most prominently apparent in the third kind of work defined by Institutional Pedagogy, work that attends to the analysis of the psychic dimension of organising, the question of desire, as we will read in the coming sections, is still present in its materialist and group based functions.

In this way we can understand that neither micro nor macro politics is subordinated to the other. Guattari insists that critical analysis can only meet its potency when it crosses and reorganises fields, knowledges and subjectivities: in this case, when it comes to bear on social fields in and beyond the institution, and into the life worlds of practitioners operating in the

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<sup>493</sup> As referenced in the Introduction, these concepts are discussed a number of times in Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*; and in the chapter 'Micropolitics and Segmentarity' in Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*.

<sup>494</sup> Suely Rolnik, 'The Geopolitics of Pimping,' *Transversal*, 1106 (October 2006), <http://eipcp.net/transversal/1106/rolnik/en>.

sites in which official culture is produced. This crossing, Guattari describes as 'transversality'. Transversality can be understood as the link between micro political analysis and the composition of new 'transversal' lines that seek to organise social and institutional life otherwise and therefore produce new macro political realities. As such, the work of 'the cross' (the term used by Oury in his descriptions) takes place in the register of the sensible in order to make changes of more recognisable impact.

Guattari's insistence that critical analysis must also be transversal is best understood as a movement between critical thought and the conditions in which it is practiced; it does not simply name a tool kit for analysis in the name of micropolitics (as some commentators have suggested); it also provides the impetus for the *work* of thinking with conditions: to call into question the use of critical thought and theory where it does not attend to the dimensions of life that surround it, and to provide possible routes towards practices that do. As Jacques Pain suggests of Institutional Pedagogy, 'the cross', or the 'transverse is the approach of the 'thinker against': a thinker who moves through and is not at all comfortable in the social system.'<sup>495</sup>

Thinking with conditions as work takes place at this juncture — of a micropolitical methodology and a macro political encounter. It insists on traversing both the forces organising contemporary art and those within the social field that seek to use the opportunities of public discourse to organise our world and culture otherwise. It challenges the formats and modes of subjectivation these programmes reinforce: the conventions of detached speaking and listening in lecture theatres, with packed programmes and large audiences, with little concern for the consequence of the interactions.<sup>496</sup>

#### 4.2.2 Working with Material Conditions

The term 'material' conditions, when it is used in the world of work is generally meant to relate to those conditions we might consider to be on the macropolitical register: questions of pay, pension, or the manifested organisation of time. Yet as Carlin and Wallin suggest, in Oury's concept of the 'materialisme scolaire', or school materialism, 'material' conditions of work are

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<sup>495</sup> Pain, 'Invariants. Towards an Institutional Practice in Institutions.'

<sup>73</sup> This discussion has been informed by my collaboration with theorists Susan Kelly and Valeria Graziano.

ascertained through practices of experimentation.<sup>497</sup> The material of the institution is seen as a 'problem' that is not reducible to a priori articulations or solutions. Material conditions of work are those 'heavy aspects' that define ethics, rules and regulations, and may be defined by those one might find within trade union movements are included in these, but equally, and perhaps more so, are changes to structures required to alter them, and to produce the 'instensification of relays'<sup>498</sup> that cut across existing institutions, micropolitical or sensed aspects of a place and these more macro political concerns. In this sense, Oury and Vasquez define Institutional Pedagogy from both a static point of view, read as 'particular activities within particular hours' and a dynamic point of view — as a work of transformation of the school, changing techniques, relations between groups and individuals at conscious and unconscious levels, the re-structuring of the milieu of the school to create situations that favour new modes of becoming.<sup>499</sup> The 'matter' of the modelling clay of the institution of analysis at La Borde, says Guattari, is generated through the entangling '...of workshops, meetings, everyday life in dining rooms, bedrooms, cultural life, sports, and games ...'<sup>500</sup>

Yet how might a consideration of the genealogy of Institutional Analysis as Oury and Guattari conceived of it, and its particular debt to Freinet's negotiation of the communist project of emancipatory education help to clarify the political challenges of thinking with neoliberal conditions in the investigations of the Centre for Possible Studies? Many critiques of communist education center on its lack of creative autonomy and its over-emphasis on the pedagogy of work that was modeled on the mechanistic formation of the factory. Such a pedagogical approach is often regarded as contradictory because it defines the conditions of a supposedly radical pedagogy of liberation in the mechanistic terms of factory labour, which are precisely antithetical to the ideals of freedom and equality. A consideration of the definitions of work articulated by pedagogists after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution can help to shed further light on this problem, and the ways in which Freinet, and later Oury and Vasquez, tried to address it. Freinet gained much of his insight for the creation of 'schools of the people' through his encounter with Nadezhda Krupskaya. In 1917, Krupskaya was appointed as deputy to the People's Commissar for Education, Anatoliy Lunacharskiy, in charge of the Adult Education

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<sup>497</sup> Matthew Carlin and Jason Wallin. *Deleuze and Guattari, Politics and Education: For a People-Yet-to-Come* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 137.

<sup>498</sup> *ibid*

<sup>499</sup> As quoted in *ibid* 138

<sup>500</sup> Guattari, *De Leros à La Borde*, 66.

Division and met Freinet in 1925. A teacher and author of eleven volumes of propositions for a post-capitalist education program (mostly untranslated into English), in addition to being Lenin's partner, much of Krupskaya's writing centred on the question of work. Her notion of a work-based education involved the convening of theoretical and practical skills to realize '...a ...full, beautiful and joyful life in society.'<sup>501</sup> Far from seeing work as simply productive in the industrial sense—and learning as a training for employment or for the production of a class—Krupskaya understood the role of education as 'a tool for the transformation of contemporary society.'<sup>502</sup> Work was attentive to the question of who defined work: 'Only the working class can turn a labour school into 'a tool for the transformation of contemporary society,'<sup>503</sup> she said. Thus Krupskaya considered principles of self-organization and self-management to be important means in the material construction of the desire for another kind of existence. In a country where the working masses had taken power into their own hands, she suggested, school 'self-management should endow students with the ability to pool resources and work together to solve the problems that arise in life.'<sup>504</sup> Self-management in schools should aim to develop the activity of each child in study, work and socially useful tasks, in order to involve all pupils and offer them equal rights and opportunities, as well as equal obligations.<sup>505</sup>

At the centre of the pedagogical proposition of Krupskaya and others were principles of self-management and a micro-political attention to the relationship of students and teachers with each other and with the world outside of their classrooms. Recognizing that such assertions were made by many pedagogical theories but seldom realized on a large scale, Krupskaya suggested practical interventions around the organization of time in schools. 'We should not overwhelm pupils,' she suggested, '...and should leave them sufficient time for independent work, rational exploration, organization of collective life in school, [...] physical work [to maintain the school] and active involvement in daily [social] life.'<sup>506</sup> At the heart of this process

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<sup>501</sup> Nadezhda Krupskaya, 'One Should Learn to Work with One's Head and Hands, A Letter to the Young Pioneers 1938,' in *On Labour Oriented Education and Instruction* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1982), 136.

<sup>502</sup> Nadezhda Krupskaya, 'The Young Pioneer Movement, A Pedagogical Problem,' in *On Education* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1957), 121.

<sup>503</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>504</sup> Nadezhda Krupskaya, *Pedagogiceskie socinenija v 11 tomah [Educational Works in Eleven Volumes]*, Vol. 3 (Moscow: APN-RSFSR, 1957-63), 203-4.

<sup>505</sup> Skatkin and Cov'janov, 'Nadezhda, Krupskaya (1869-1939),' 49-60.

<sup>506</sup> Krupskaya, 'The Young Pioneer Movement, A Pedagogical Problem,' 121.

were School Councils set up to make decisions on all aspects of life in the school and to engage in work outside of its walls. The notion of 'way of life' education, or education that would enable students to learn through life practices, was not uncommon in the earlier education theories of Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, Maria Montessori and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Yet these theories had not been conceived in the context of a shift to provision of state education on such a large scale, nor had they given such emphasis to a re-balancing of the relationship between production and reproductive relations, of learning to be collective to produce a common and to engage in both care and analysis of the community.

In her address to the Young Pioneers in 1927, Krupskaya suggests a departure from party formalism and towards mutual knowledge and support of group member's life conditions and analysis of these conditions, alongside group-building activities.<sup>507</sup> Krupskaya's suggestion that time and conditions must be altered in order to valorize the social, communal, and reproductive aspects of life were indicative of a careful and sophisticated engagement with Marx and Engels on questions of social reproduction. Such an injunction also prefigured a concern with what feminists would later go onto amplify in the 1970s—the concept of reproductive labor. Reproductive labour entails the recognition of unwaged caring and facilitative work as the 'determining force' of both capitalist labor power and post-capitalist imaginaries.<sup>508</sup> This inclusion of reproductive labour as a critical dimension of the school's 'spirit' is pre-empted in her speech, 'Should Women's Work Be Taught to Boys?' As she puts it:

'...just as girls, boys too must be taught how to sew, knit and mend clothes. In a word they should be taught to do everything which is indispensable in life...children should be assigned (without dividing tasks between girls and boys) to take turns in preparing school breakfasts, washing dishes, preparing rooms...'<sup>509</sup>

This expansion of the notion of work learned in the school was not to result in the abdication nor abolition of teachers, but rather a re-purposing of their work to support students to 'organize themselves' and their transversal relations within the broader society: that is the facilitation of 'the cross'. This facilitative role did not exclude the 'heavier' material conditions

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<sup>507</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>508</sup> Engels' statement, 'The determining force in history is the production of and reproduction of life,' is quoted by later feminists including Sylvia Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle* (New York: PM Press, 2012).

<sup>509</sup> Nadezhda Krupskaya, 'Should Women's Work Be Taught to Boys?' in *On Labour Oriented Education and Instruction* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1982), 115.

of life in the form of social and economic valourisation. Teachers' salaries were increased and their status promoted as key agents for embedding the reproductive and analytic pursuits of the school within the localized processes of social transformation. However, they were conjoined with the dimension of the 'spirit'. This spirit, traced from Krupskaya's early writing through the genealogies of Ecole Moderne and Institutional Pedagogy is not simply a spirit that divides artistic and social critiques, as Chiapello and Boltanski describe it in a very different context in their book *The New Spirit of Capitalism*.<sup>510</sup> Rather, it names something like an ethos that convenes artistic, social, and reproductive elements in the formation of a post-capitalist existence. For Krupskaya, every aspect of the self-management of students was to be creative and experimental—both within independent exploration and in productive agricultural or mechanical labor. Drawing on her readings of Marx, she suggested that creativity should infuse all labor, and that work should never be fixed into strictly 'mechanistic' tendencies. Against the alienated conditions of labour that prevailed under industrial conditions of production and reproduction, Krupskaya's radical pedagogy emphasised close analysis of the smallest details that are 'indispensible to life.' In this respect, her approach to pedagogy can be seen to foreshadow the micro-political work of thinking with conditions, which we encounter in post-war Institutional Pedagogy.

The praxes of thinking with conditions found in the context of post-revolutionary Russia and post-war France are articulated in the context of schooling. Nonetheless, their attention to the micropolitical dimensions of institutional work has significant implications for the re-thinking of public programming, which blatantly ignores conditions of reproductive work, and perpetuate a division of labour between the creative (public, speaking, virtuoso), the reproductive (administration, care-giving, 'unglamorous tasks') and social (audience, issues, thematics) and very rarely see the undoing of this division as a material or immaterial demand of their work.

For Oury and Guattari, the materialism of the school often encapsulates what has traditionally been described as 'immaterial' work. Drawing from Krupskaya's earlier writings, it suggests that it is in the activities of both occupying the time of the school and the re-arrangement of its conditions that 'school materialism' might be thought.

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<sup>510</sup> Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Verso, 2006).

In this way, the school was as much a preparation for the world as it was a prefiguration of a coming society in which questions of care and community were driving forces for the production of life in all its dimensions. Far from the mantra of employability that contemporary European universities have been forced to promote, the pedagogy of work promoted by Krupskaya, and contemporaries such as Anton Makarenko was not seen as training for industrial or agricultural labor in itself; on the contrary, this alternative pedagogy of work was concerned to mobilise the desiring aspect of work for producing life on more equitable grounds. Only when it is possible to question the working body in this way, Makarenko suggested, could a balanced, and 'genuinely free' development of the personality emerge and a new, 'socialist pattern of moral and ethical relations' be formed.<sup>511</sup> The positing of freedom within the complex interplay between student councils and different forms of time and labor was a pedagogy based on collective negotiation. If Krupskaya and Makaranko first developed the ideas for such pedagogy in the context of post-revolutionary Russia, it also bears a striking affinity with the more contemporary notion of the 'cross' in post-war French ideas of Institutional Analysis and the idea of the material condition of the institution as that which includes a concern with desire and experimentation with practices to produce change.<sup>512</sup>

As Freinet suggests, '[a] new form of school organization implies first of all a new arrangement, a different way of using space'<sup>513</sup> [and time] which, as we have seen, can extend from the classroom itself to the entire complex of school property. 'The new education through work,' Freinet predicts, 'will be what its materials and its organization make it.'<sup>514</sup> The overall instructional medium is inseparable from the message.<sup>515</sup>

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<sup>511</sup> Anton Makarenko, *The Problem of Soviet School Education* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1938), 30. 38.

<sup>512</sup> Makarenko, with 50 communards from the Gorky Colony, went on to develop these practices at the Dzerzhinsky Commune until the mid-1930s, when his involvement was deemed to be too "radical" and "entrepreneurial". The Dzerzhinsky Commune had exceptionally good production facilities and moved into producing goods that included the first "Soviet Leica" camera. The context of industrial production, forced labor and nationalist preoccupations, however, pushed the commune closer to a labour camp in which the notion of work-based education was re-oriented towards industrial production for the state economy. Here, Makarenko's insistence student self-management, the re-organization of time re-combined with state-sanctioned focus on intensive, factory-based production and turned collective accountability into a tool of control and punishment. See Makarenko, 'Heroes of Social Education.'

<sup>513</sup> Freinet, *Education Through Work: A Model for Child-Centered Learning*, 368.

<sup>514</sup> *ibid.*, 402.

<sup>515</sup> Sivell, 'Freinet on Practical Classroom Organization: Concepts of What it is to Know and Learn.'

This attention to both the spontaneous and pre-formatted dimensions of 'school material' no doubt emerged also in relation to the fact that beyond being teachers, the Freinets were also political organisers. In 1926, the Freinets organised a cooperative union for teachers in France. The elaborate networks of circulation which such organizational work entailed suggests that the Freinets were not only disseminating methods, but also attempting to engage in building a wider movement that could help to activate the creative and reproductive dimensions of the notion of work.

This approach to work has important implications for the more militant idea of public programming with which this thesis is primarily concerned. The conceptualisation of the material conditions of the institution suggests that its work might be to mobilise the cross between desiring, experimental, reproductive and more overtly social dimensions. The mechanisms for doing this are not always the same. In the case of Implicated Theatre, an open budget was one such mechanism for shifting the relationship between desires and the mechanics of production. In the assemblage created by this mechanism, practices began to emerge in both the micropolitical and macropolitical dimensions of our work, exposing discomforts with its more authoritarian dimensions but also deepening our engagements with how we might constitute our work in and outside of the group in other ways. For example, cultural workers involved with the Serpentine Gallery resurrected its trade union and fought its policies on zero hours contracts and unpaid internships, but also introduced questions of group desire into these discussions, inviting staff to take part in group sessions. The group began to proliferate activities with other groups in the city, directly supporting the alteration of conditions for domestic workers, hotel workers, and others engaged in the unseen side of cultural labour while at the same time setting up a practice of mutual aid through which funds designated for theatrical production could also be allocated to support group members with food and housing. Such practices did not produce a wholesale re-orientation of the Serpentine Gallery, nor of these institutions, but indicated how we might imagine the contours of the kind of cultural institution one would need to inhabit public programming otherwise.

### 4.2.3 Group Work

What is clear from the emancipatory research practices of the Implicated Theatre group is that this re-conceptualised materiality of the work of the institution does not emerge from the offices of Directors, nor the curators of 'new institutionalism', nor under the banners of public programming events on themes like 'Democracy', and rather at the scale of the group. Groups and networks of groups (or 'micro-groups as they are called in IP) have the capacity to cause eruptive relationships with the institution in its branded and architectural imaginaries. Understood micropolitically, institutions do not only comprise those people on the payroll, or those in this or that professional role, but a much wider constituency of interests, subjectivities and desires. 'It is in this dimension of life and death, of this political economy of philosophy thought in random and precarious working groups... that the work of the school should be understood.'<sup>516</sup>

Micropolitical work is certainly more time consuming and not wholly gratifying if it is linked to the desire for immediate successes or defined in the teleological terms of vanguard narratives. Yet, as Pain suggests, the scale of the group breaks down the work of change to 'fragments, pieces, here and there,' and to the 'creation of 'islets', of alternative[s],'<sup>517</sup> which grow into disruptive agencies. Of course not all institutions are the same, and nor are institutions dedicated to particular services inter-changeable. As Oury says, 'It is true that a hospital is not completely identical to a school, a teacher's training center or an emergency shelter for young offenders, or a day hospital or service night for people assaulted in the street [...]'<sup>518</sup> Yet such distinctions should not be regarded as an insurmountable obstacle to the micro-political work of re-configuring institutions in such a way that is responsive to the subjectivities and desires of the groups who inhabit these institutions, either as service users or service providers. As Oury puts it, '[...] such distinctions [between different institutions]...should be introduced only after the groundwork' of the group has taken place.'<sup>519</sup>

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<sup>516</sup> Oury, 'Institutions: de quoi parlons-nous?'

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<sup>518</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>519</sup> *ibid.*

It is at the level of the group, Guattari suggests, that a turn from the institution as such to the formation of the group narrative, an interrogation of 'group fantasies' which includes reflection on the breaks and disagreements within a field (or Institution or School) that presents itself as seamless and unified. It also allows for a distinction between what Guattari called the 'group-subject', who, as opposed to 'subjected groups'. groups defined by social distinctions of identity, pathology, profession or any other categorization – in favour of groups defining themselves according to their own criteria.<sup>520</sup> At La Borde there were doctors 'assigned' to various patients as there are at conventional psychiatric institutions. Yet a central component of the clinical process at La Borde were therapeutic clubs, which organized themselves around issues in the group, and attempted to develop solutions for patients around common concepts or problems that could be explored collectively over time.<sup>521</sup>

This ability of the group to 'define its own criteria' is inscribed both in terms of its ability to determine its own desires and problematics, and also, to defining its terms, and thereby giving language a field of reference: 'a finite but open field, that has, you might say, a certain subjective consistency.'<sup>522</sup> Like the deciding groups to which we referred in the first chapter, and the investigation groups of chapter three, the work of making groups lies in activating the consistency of the 'life' of the group. According to IP practitioners, 'One of the first tasks of a co-operative is to agree the 'contract for the life of the class', or, in other words, the rules by which the class will live.'<sup>523</sup> The setting up of a class co-operative displaces the 'vanity of verbiage'. Instead, the dialogue between teacher and student sets up the mechanisms for a 'permanent dialogue' between the children themselves and between the children and the teacher, which can be adjusted each morning with formal evaluation meetings to evaluation throughout.<sup>524</sup> This very disciplined practice of regular meetings underwrites the possibility of

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<sup>520</sup> Felix Guattari, "Where Does Group Psychotherapy Begin?" in *Psychoanalysis and Transversality* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2015), 346

<sup>521</sup> Felix Guattari, 'Reflections on Teaching as the Reverse of Analysis,' in *Psychoanalysis and Transversality* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2015), 342.

<sup>522</sup> Felix Guattari, "Where Does Group Psychotherapy Begin?" in *Psychoanalysis and Transversality* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2015), 347.

<sup>523</sup> Hugh Starkey, 'Freinet and Citizenship Education' (paper, Plaisir d'apprendre et Travail Coopératif. Les Méthodes Éducatives et la Philosophie Pratique de Célestin Freinet, Service Culturel de l'Ambassade de France, London, June 6-7, 1997).

<sup>524</sup> Starkey, 'Freinet and Citizenship Education.'

classroom invention and also its ability to respond and re-shape its relationship to the broader site in which the group is operating.<sup>525</sup>

The call toward particular techniques within the literature of IP exists to enable the thinking-together of groups, and to valorise this collective thinking over that of the one-off 'visioning' exercise, or the manifestation of directorial desires in mission statements and policies. In their repetition and duration, groups have the capacity to continually shift and alter the institutional landscape such that its exterior frames and internal hierarchies no longer define it. This was also true of Fernand Oury and Aida Vasquez's adaptation of Freinet practices of the *Quoi de neuf?* and the free text to urban schools, in which they had students and educators produce micro-monographs, reflections on teaching, students and group processes that could be reviewed to determine what was happening at the conscious and unconscious level of the institution. The reflection on these mini-monographs would in turn produce the 'work of group analysis, an object of common activity to serve the formation and mediation of the group, both in terms of its inner relations, its own practices of instituting new relationships and in terms of its relationship with the broader set of roles and practices within the institution of the school.'<sup>526</sup>

The implications of such an approach for the more militant idea of contemporary public programming with which this thesis is concerned were brought into sharp focus by our experience of Group Analysis at the Centre for Possible Studies. Specifically, the fight to maintain the operation of the group, but also the training it provided in de-centering the institutional role vis-à-vis its participants constituted what we might begin to understand as the work of creating the 'public of problems'. Techniques such as group-writing and the documentation of discussion held us, standing in for the hierarchical and coercive frame of the institution as we had previously experienced it. It was this work of de-centering, and the process of acquiring the techniques of group writing and discussion, while also attempting to push at the internal constraints from below, that the work of thinking with conditions entailed.

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<sup>525</sup> Discussion of teacher in Jacques Carbonnel and Jacques George, 'La pédagogie coopérative,' *Cahiers Pédagogiques* No. 347 (October 1996).

<sup>526</sup> Oury and Vasquez, *Vers Une Pédagogie Institutionnelle*, 45. (Author's translation)

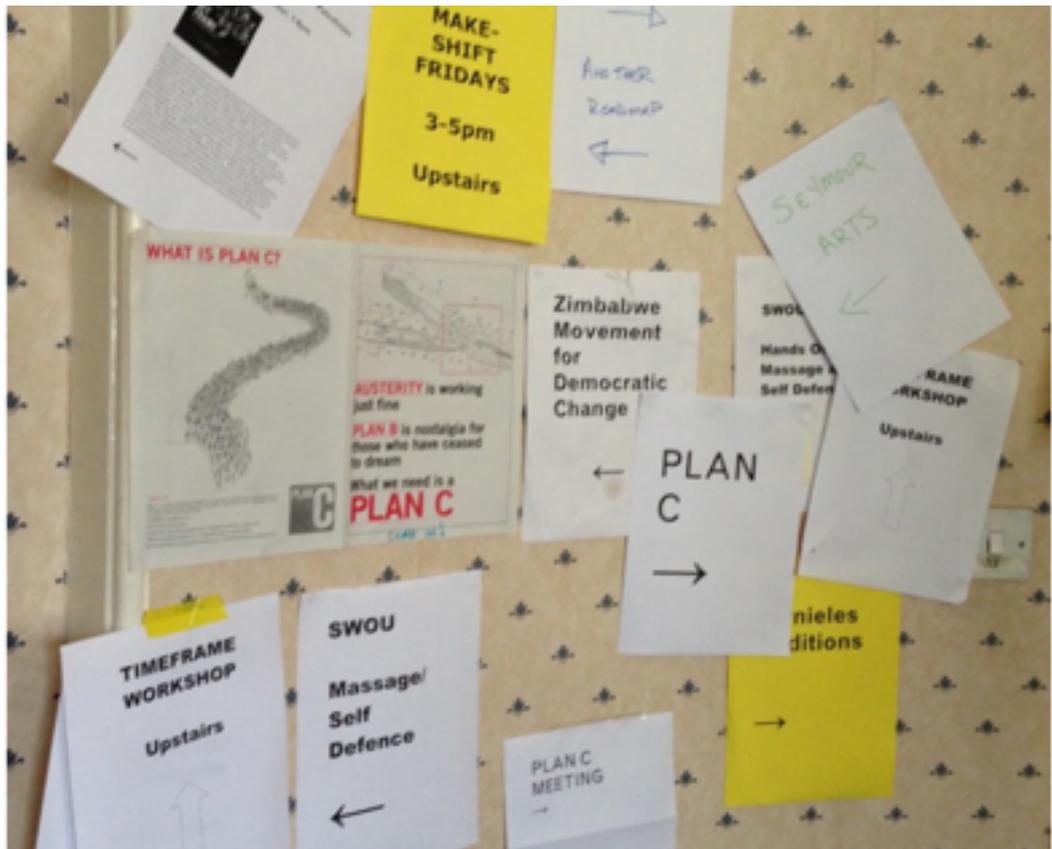


Figure 4.14 : Wall of Groups using The Centre for Possible Studies, 2012. Author's Photograph.

#### 4.2.4 From Make Work to Making Infrastructure: the 'Un-coercive Re-arrangement of Desire'

*We can summarize all in a more complex but clear question: a school in good mental health, which cares for and treats its human relations, is committed to democracy, learning, and teaches respect for heterogeneity ... We see it every day. It may take more time initially, but it re-awakens the desire of school, which today is almost a miracle...*<sup>527</sup>

Jacques Pain

What is clear from both the work of materialising the school and that of the group is that the vertical organisation of the institution is interrupted. The cooperative councils of Institutional Pedagogy, says Jacques Pain, disrupt the 'vanity' of authoritarianism, and the 'vanity of verbiage.'<sup>528</sup> As such, much of the work of the group in IP is defined to 're-arrange' the desires for this position, both as they are held by those in positions of authority, such as the teacher or the school principle, and those who desire them through the modes of subjectivation that continually reproduce this role in language and social structures. The trick, says Gayatri Spivak in an account of her own work in radical literacy campaigns, 'is to train the teachers...[and in so doing to] uncoercively [rearrange] their (most often unexamined) desires for specific kinds of futures for the children...'<sup>529</sup>

Re-framed as the 'uncoercive re-arrangement of desire', training is not simply concerned to practice horizontal organising strategies; instead, it is more concerned with the necessary transitions in the fields of desire that hold the coercive and authoritarian regimes in place — whether these exist at the level of policy or at the level of the singular consistency of any agent operating in the atmosphere of an institution.

This re-arrangement of desire is often subtle and difficult to register in 'the vanity of verbiage'. It must be practiced. As Freinet says, 'the spirit of the teacher is not enough.'<sup>530</sup> This 'not being enough' requires changes to be made to the material manifestations that enable a shift from the valuation of talking 'with virtuosity on all subjects taught' to the cultivation of group desire, or their 'optimistic hope in life.'<sup>531</sup> The re-arrangement of desire thus replaces 'constant action

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<sup>527</sup> Pain, 'Fernand Oury et la pédagogie institutionnelle.'

<sup>528</sup> Pain, 'La Pédagogie Institutionnelle de Fernand Oury.'

<sup>529</sup> Spivak, 'Righting Wrongs,' 526.

<sup>530</sup> Freinet, *Les Invariants Pédagogiques: Code Pratique D'école Moderne*.

<sup>531</sup> Freinet, *Les Invariants Pédagogiques: Code Pratique D'école Moderne*.

directed by a teacher' with a system of activities and diverse mediations that produce the 'imperative for reciprocity.'<sup>532</sup>

Freinet explicitly addresses the teacher's own desires in a discussion of what he calls the 'sensation of the classroom':

...You are great size and, for that reason alone, you tend to regard as inferior those below you. It is a kind of sensation, physiological say that is the opposite of the sensation of the dizzying empty when the balcony is an 8th or on a peak overlooking the valley...These are impressions, feelings that hamper much more than we think all candidates to modern pedagogy.<sup>533</sup>

In this account, the inventive process of group formation stands against what Freinet describes as 'make work', or, to put it in the terms of post-Fordist communication theory, 'idle talk.' Freinet suggests that working without this shift to desires that respond to conditions, evokes a 'tiredness', an 'afront to one's dignity', as he describes it. Against the guilt and inferiority of make work, he suggests that teachers should 'talk less' and rather 'create the context for listening'.<sup>534</sup> That the term '*instituteur*' translates to 'teacher' is not lost on Freinet or Oury. The *instituteur* for Freinet or Oury is not the teacher, but the process through which institutionalisation takes place. In this respect, the act of teaching entails a shift in emphasis from a person to a facilitated process. Freinet, Oury, and Vasquez join Freire in re-formulating, but not obliterating the teacher. 'The problem,' says Pain, 'is not leaving the floor — because we know that when we leave the floor, we give the floor, we precisely give it, let the elite, culture take it...'<sup>535</sup> Rather, the field of desires surrounding the teacher allow for the analysis and re-working of the field of desires in groups in and out of the institution.

The need to re-construct the classroom to offset authoritarian entities - be they in the form of the teacher or the micro-aggressions that fill in in their absence, is echoed in Guattari's own contention with the disjuncture he experienced between the practices of Institutional Pedagogy and those encountered in the classroom of Lacan. '...By not establishing a structure that is radically different from a corporate group, a club or even a lobbying group,' Guattari

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<sup>532</sup> Oury and Vasquez, *Vers Une Pédagogie Institutionnelle*, 83.

<sup>533</sup> Freinet, *Les Invariants Pédagogiques: Code Pratique D'école Moderne*.

<sup>534</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>535</sup> Pain, 'La Pédagogie Institutionnelle de Fernand Oury.'

says, 'the School keeps itself from any teaching other than Lacan's...[it] develops a pedagogy of mimeticism, distributes analytical tricks; [and] revives [ideas and practices] from the Lacanian ranks'.<sup>536</sup>

The question of teaching for Guattari follows that of Oury and Vasquez in suggesting a shift in the field of the desires 'to the definition of the conditions of signifying production beyond the seminar...[of Lacan] and beyond the pleasure of being in his wake [...]'<sup>537</sup> The call to transversality, and to agencies within and outside of the existing structure of an institution is not simply about producing structural change. Transversality works with other fields to produce a 'theory of desire' that can account for its structuring effect on these various domains; it also involves promoting 'analytic groups as a counter-point or as adjacent to various institutions, analysing the imagination of castes, analysing the instance of the letter in bureaucratisation at every level, [as well as] relationships between bureaucracy and the death drive, etc.'<sup>538</sup>

An experiment in this kind of institutional transversality was vividly realised by the practices of the FGERI (Federation of Institutional study Groups and Research), which drew from from IP and IA to bring academic and non-academic research coalitions together from across different social institutions in the 1970s on questions motivated by pre-occupations and desires. Some groups worked on the level of neighbourhoods, others on questions cutting across disciplines. At one point in the 1970s, there were over one hundred researchers working in such groups. Articles that they produced were published in the journal *Recherches*, but more importantly, were developed with manifestations in local areas and within existing establishments. Guattari distinguished here between the notion of trans-disciplinarity, in which those from different backgrounds would come together around a problem, and transversality, an exercise that moved beyond articulated institutions and roles and in most cases included those without academic or professional qualifications.<sup>539</sup> The FGERI differed from other forms of multi-disciplinarity insofar as its members were also united in their commitment to a post-capitalist conception of society in which social resources would be distributed equally, as would be its roles. It manifested in the production of 'distinctive oppositions' to the current system, not

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<sup>536</sup> Guattari, 'Reflections on Teaching as the Reverse of Analysis,' 341.

<sup>537</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>538</sup> *ibid.*, 344.

<sup>539</sup> Guattari, 'Reflections on Teaching as the Reverse of Analysis,' 80-85.

simply on the grounds that the current system was capitalist but from the perspective of having attempted other ways of being and knowing. Thus the making of careers, of acquiring bigger and better research posts or in garnering the highest contracts were not among its many achievements. Its complementary political entity the Left Opposition ensured FGERI was also inextricably linked to the project of political and social antagonism, and asserted its commitment to anti-imperialism, and to changing the social relations of production to be more equitable rather than replicating hierarchy, centralist positions and market values as had both the socialist government and the more traditional communist parties.

It was through this political entity that FGERI members connected with a younger generation working and studying in a number of fields, for and with whom they developed internships in living otherwise, as opposed to those that welcomed younger people into a series of professionalized social segregations. Hence students set up their own summer camps and research coalitions, asking other students, the young, working and unemployed poor about the social and psychological effects of the education system. In response to these enquiries and in the months leading to the uprisings of May '68 they set up drop in centres to support these same constituencies, in their struggles with mental illness and stress.<sup>540</sup> FGERI members from the education sector, instigated the occupation of the Department of Education in May 1968 and went on to occupy the Odeon Theatre with artist Jean Jacques Lebel. Those working in the medical and health sectors brought medical equipment and food to support the occupation of this prominent cultural institution by Lebel and others from the artistic community. This was particularly ironic when one considers that prior to this moment, Lebel had been invited to set up an artists' wing of the FGERI, but his artist friends refused to engage with the field of psychiatry.<sup>541</sup> There they founded the GERPI, the institutional pedagogy group (the Study Group and institutional educational research).<sup>542</sup> Accounts of cognate political struggles from earlier contexts such as these are particularly interesting because they can help to illuminate the ways in which the infrastructural weave of institutions can be reconfigured through the slow and painstaking work of collective political struggle.

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<sup>540</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>541</sup> Dosse, *Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: Intersecting Lives*, 173.

<sup>542</sup> Pain, 'La Pédagogie Institutionnelle de Fernand Oury.'

Though operating at a much smaller scale, the importance of such a transversal process was revealed at the Centre for Possible Studies as something far more significant than questions of 'access', 'inclusion', 'diversity' or 'inter-disciplinarity' which are regularly used in the discussion of the involvement of non-professional artists and communities in public programming initiatives. This importance revealed itself in the fields of desires that hold certain positions and conceptions of institution in place. Within the Implicated Theatre Group, for example, those involved with the arts were deeply frustrated by the Serpentine Gallery's lack of recognition or response to the radical shifts in cultural work that were taking place at the Centre for Possible Studies. These desires for recognition at various times centred the role of the Gallery, re-affirming its power, and rendered us its subjects. Others, who were less involved and desiring of the authority/approval/recognition of the arts, were much less concerned with its authority, so long as they had autonomy over decision-making about resources and could put these towards both the mutual aid of the group and our interface with organisations working from migrant and precarious perspectives. The intersection of these desires enabled the Implicated group to work across, to think beyond the dynamic of institution-subject relation, displacing institutional authority so as not to mimic it and so as to re-shape our very notion of institution as well as our responses to it. At the same time, the desires surrounding institutional change pushed members of the group to intersect the questions of precarious work with those of cultural work and develop modes of interruption of the regular modes of production at the Serpentine and at other cultural institutions. Though these initiatives did not result in wholesale organisational change at the Serpentine, they did in shifts in desires that cut across such institutions. Thus, while much of what has been written in this section refers directly to the authority of classrooms and teachers, and to the desires that surround them, it is possible to transpose this response to the various modes of coercive and vertical processes in public programming and our responses to it. These responses constitute a practice of thinking with the conditions of desire in their active re-formulation.

The proposition of a more militant public programming that thinks with conditions of desire slowly reconfigures across the ins and outside of institutions as to de-stabilises them. Such an intervention may at times seem to do little to alter the neoliberal reproduction of the institution, yet troubling the conditions of these institutions can also produce intense exchanges, confrontations, and challenging situations. We might think this shift not only as that of the institution but as that of infrastructural change. As Angela Mitropoulos suggests, the term 'infrastructure' includes and overtakes 'networks, platforms, architecture, sewage, road,

bridge, logistics, communications, topology, diagnostic systems, algorithms, assemblages, diagrams, buildings, and flows'. For Mitropoulos, infrastructure is neither 'base' nor 'medium' but precisely the 'movement and relation as these take form.'<sup>543</sup> Mitropoulos asks, 'is it possible for infrastructure to be a field of experimentation and variation' that attends 'to an ongoing and critical engagement with the between called the 'being-with?''<sup>544</sup>

Neither the democratised platform nor the performance of the virtuoso, infrastructure is constituted by 'the weave.'<sup>545</sup> This is not to say that cultural institutions cannot also weave infrastructural relations in ways that reproduce the values and conditions of neoliberal culture. Yet the micropolitical work of thinking with conditions can also reconfigure the weave, through which publics are constituted and prepared for the production of as yet un-named entities required to produce new worlds. Rather than the event, the platform, the debate or dialogue, or even infrastructure in itself, might public programming be offered as a frame with which to support the weave of resistant infrastructures?

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<sup>543</sup> Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion*, 117.

<sup>544</sup> *ibid.*, 117.

<sup>545</sup> *ibid.*, 118.

### 4.3. Techniques for Public Programming Otherwise

*It is a Friday afternoon in April.*

*The Centre for Possible Studies is still open but now under threat of eviction.*

*The landlord who has promised free rent is not returning our calls, possibly in relation to the anti-gentrification work we have done in the area. The Serpentine Gallery is under new management and, after, 6 years of funding, is now regularly asking for something 'new'. But, walking through the door, one hears the repetitive whoosh of the risograph printer purchased by self organised sex worker group, x:talk. It is running off posters for another group, working on questions of free labour in the arts. The risograph is surrounded by 20 people, folding, boxing, drinking. In the next room is the sound of a crèche, set up for children whose parents are on a demonstration against education cuts. People walk in and out with boxes of beer, trying to set up a bar for an evening fundraiser amidst the chaos. Upstairs there is a theatre workshop with bags of food ready for participants to take home. Everyone is making plans for the opening of a new autonomous space in which to move.<sup>546</sup>*

The genealogies of Institutional Pedagogy explored in this chapter have attempted to disrupt and de-centre the practices of the institution from a number of angles. First, by expanding the enunciative conditions through which we understand institutions, we can also begin to think beyond the stated aims and representational logics of the institution. Rather than a structure, architecture or brand, institutions or processes of *institutionalisation* have the potential to convene complex infrastructures in making and re-making processes of thinking and being together. Further, I have suggested that these processes are specifically oriented towards thinking with conditions as they exist both at the level of the existing and the possible. A consideration of the radical genealogies of Institutional Pedagogy can help to shed light on the radical potential of public programming. Against the staging of discussions and debates around urgent themes that do nothing to alter the neoliberal framing and containment of such public events, I have suggested that public programming can offer a space and time for the proliferation of groups that work on the materiality of institutions by attending to their productive, reproductive, and desiring dimensions. A more precise way of thinking about this collective work to reconfigure the neoliberal institution is to consider how the slow,

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<sup>546</sup> Author's fieldnotes.

painstaking, and unheroic work of the group or groups produces infrastructures that work across, in between and in relation to establishments of culture.

Rather than sites of public presentation, public programming here might be re-cast as what popular education movements in the US describe as 'movement half-way houses' A movement 'halfway house' is an established group or organization that sits at odds with the 'larger society because its participants are actively involved in efforts to bring about a desired change.'<sup>547</sup> Spaces such as the Highlander Folk School and the Citizenship Schools of the civil rights movement discussed in Chapter 3 and like the FGERI described in this Chapter, provided such spaces in which groups can gather, problems may be articulated, and resources may be distributed to build power for critiques, rather than proliferate analyses of them. This thinking of the cultural institution as a halfway house contributing to the production of resistant post-capitalist infrastructures may seem somewhat fantastical in the current conjuncture. Yet if such institutions are the spaces in which some of the most important political thought takes place, they are indeed important sites in which to support and foster thinking with conditions.

In many ways, this approach builds on the capacities of cultural organisers to put entities, intellectuals, ideas, and aesthetics into relation. Rather than focusing on questions of the 'new' or the 'urgent', organisers would use these skills to facilitate conversations around social and political problems as determined by groups in struggle. The process of acting together is made particularly meaningful when it is linked to the slow and painstaking work of reconfiguring post-capitalist infrastructure in such a way that fosters a radical rethinking of the infrastructures that support radical social change. Occupying cultural institutions differently in order to create halfway houses for social and political organizing may at times seem difficult if not impossible. Yet the group work at the Centre for Possible Studies, like that of the Institutional Pedagogy of the post-war period before it, demonstrate the forms of power and agency at stake in thinking with conditions.

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<sup>547</sup> Aldon D. Morris, *The Origins of The Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organising for Change* (New York: The Free Press, 1986), 139

## Conclusion

Isabell Lorey argues that the subsumption of the 'public' or virtuosic aspects of life, our capacities to think and act together - with those qualities of the private, affect, organisation and care - enact a deep and profound violence upon our lifeworlds.<sup>548</sup> As I conclude these pages, the divide between words and worlds is widening. Charges of 'fake news' and 'alternative facts' abound, passionate calls to action proliferate to no avail, invitations to events emblazoned by terms like 'Democracy' and 'Assembly' flood my inbox and the sensible fabric of the struggle for the common is stretched to seemingly impossible distances. In the face of this of this, Lorey also suggests that it is through a collective virtuosity of acting together, that we might shed light onto the path of other ways of being together.

In this thesis, I have asked how, through practices of public programming, can we rehearse a movement away from the proficient, and endlessly talkative virtuoso, towards grammars of life that conjoin speaking, thinking and acting with organisational, affective care for the conditions we inhabit. Public programming in these pages, has thus been read beyond the stated intentions of artists, curators and educators, beyond affirmative and often misguided readings of its relationship to the public sphere, and beyond the field of art. I have suggested instead that what takes place under the name of public programming is more an extension of what Henry Giroux describes as a 'public pedagogy'; 'a performative practice embodied in the lived interactions among educators, audiences, texts, and institutional formations', outside of the context of formal education.<sup>549</sup> Beyond the content it presents, public programming engages in modes of subjectivation through which we learn to produce, inhabit, reproduce and propel particular sets of conditions. In the current state of public programming what this public pedagogy teaches us, what it conditions in and through us, is the collective inhabitation of urgent calls to think with the social and political issues of our time without responding to them, to engage in the mirage of publicness, in the absence of a public sphere.<sup>550</sup>

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<sup>548</sup> Lorey, *State of Insecurity: Government of the Precarious*, 128.

<sup>549</sup> Giroux, 'Cultural Studies, Public Pedagogy and the Responsibility of Intellectuals,' 61

<sup>550</sup> *Ibid.*; and Giroux, 'Public pedagogy and the Politics of Neo-liberalism: Making the Political more Pedagogical.'

In Part I, I described this public pedagogy as *thinking without conditions*. In Chapter 1 of Part I concluded that thinking *without conditions* does not mark an absence of conditions. Thinking without conditions in the field of public programming marks the enactment of a mode of habitual *pretending* that separates the urgent calls from the careful work of attending to them. The principles of the public sphere - platforms for 'dialogue', 'debate' and 'speaking out' - were read as part of a regime of justification that routinely separate emancipatory rhetorics from practices of emancipation. Reading the problem of public programming in the wider context of neoliberal modes of platforming, positions it less a 'trend' in the field of the arts or a site of experimentation, and rather a strategic device of neoliberal governance, instrumentalised to distract from the macro and micro violences of the state, the corporation and post-Fordist production.

In Chapter 2, I read this thinking without conditions through Virno's notion of 'publicness without a public sphere', suggesting that the rise of public programming and the use of platforms in many fields corresponds to an overarching tendency within post-Fordism, towards the cultivation of communicative, virtuosic and performative attributes (attributes formerly associated with the public sphere) as practices of labour. This over-emphasis creates a frenzy of passionate speech and moments of thinking together around urgent issues that is both propelled by and severed from the increasingly precarious social, affective and organisational aspects of life. A political kind of speech becomes increasingly distant from lived conditions of precarity and our ability to act upon them. The words used to describe such conditions are often rendered 'just a matter of semantics' and mark a generalised separation between emancipatory speech and the conditions to which it refers. The public pedagogy of public programming in Chapter 2 was read as a chronic over-emphasis on the voice, the solo performer and the speaker in both the structuring of labour and within certain attempts to imagine a world beyond them. Here, I suggested that instead of mourning the absence of the public sphere or trying to resurrect its attributes, we imagine the conjunction of collective political speech and thought *with* questions of organisation, care and affect from which they have been severed, linking the historically differentiated 'public' and 'private' spheres. While one might wonder what the practice of public programming might bring to this conjunction - perhaps more obviously situated within spheres associated with practices of care (domestic spaces, spaces of health, daycares) or in what Isabell Lorey has described referring to the Spanish group *precarias a la deriva* as a more autonomous 'care community' or *cuidanía*.<sup>\*551</sup>

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<sup>551</sup> Lorey *State of Insecurity* 138

I argue that public programming, in its desire to address urgent issues of the contemporary, could provide infrastructural support for such communities as they think and imagine what comes in the wake of the public sphere. At the end of Chapter 2 I name this conjunctive practice, thinking *with* conditions.

If Part I was structured around an oppositional reading of public programming centered around a critique of thinking *without* conditions, Part II offered a propositional analysis of thinking *with* conditions.

In the Interlude between these sections, I argued for thinking with conditions as a practice of suture that bridges the separations between opportunities to speak and think together and the conditions in which they are produced. I proposed that particular genealogies of radical education might provide avenues through which to activate this suturing, in ways that address urgent questions of the contemporary through practices of social and political organisation. I offered two particular genealogies that detail praxes of collective analysis centered around conditions, over the attributes of the solo virtuosic worker. I suggested that conditions in these praxes can be understood in three ways: first, as a situation, or set of circumstances that we find ourselves in; second, as a mode of becoming, enacted through the linking of collective speech, to production and re-production ('conditioning') of life forms; and third, as active orientations towards the future, that produce new conditions of the possible.<sup>552</sup>

In Chapter 3 I worked with the first of these genealogies - that of popular education. Through readings of Paulo Freire's notion of reading of the word and the world together and workbooks developed by popular education practitioners, I suggested that rather than abstract and generalised speculations offered within the current formation of public programmes, popular education might be used to create spaces in which to reflect, analyse and act upon conditions of the contemporary. Through popular education I offered a detailed response to the separations described in Part I in relation to a case study of a group of people who inhabited the framework of a public programme to read their experience of racism in relation to their conditions against the terms offered by the bureaucratic discourse of diversity. In reading the world and the word together, they produced new terms and new conditions. Here the act of naming, that is the joining of word and the world through collective analysis of and action upon

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<sup>552</sup> Online Etymology Dictionary, 'Condition,' <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=condition>.

conditions was offered as a response to the separation of emancipatory content from emancipatory consequence. Listening to the 'polyphony of thinking' found in the affective, circumstantial and silenced conditions of the world, was offered as a counter-point to the provision of platforms and voice-centred politics. Readings of Freire's attunement to the affective conditions of groups - conditions of love, commitment and care, were positioned as binding elements of collective analysis to counter the shunning of such 'banal facts' within the halls of public programming described in Part I. Finally, the temporal trajectories of organisation proposed by popular educators was posed as an antidote to the 'temp time' of public programming, its locking of themes and subjectivities into the temporality of the event. In this chapter, the practices of popular education were read as a radical occupation of the present that follows an urgent call through cyclical processes of reflection, analysis and action. Together, these attributes of popular education posed significant challenges to the way in which public programmes are organised and the blind spots and false binaries produced by the contemporary art world more generally (between process and product, the material and the immaterial, between curators and audiences, and so on). I suggested that popular education poses a radical shift in its modes of production, re-positioning public programming as less an attempt to assemble a 'general public' and more as a mechanism of support for a 'public of problems'.

In Chapter 4, the problem posed to the institutions and instituting practices of public programmes was more fully elaborated by way of the genealogy of Institutional Pedagogy. In this chapter I proposed that the institution is constituted by a set of enunciative, technical and desiring practices with the capacity to either shape or intervene upon the daily fabric of labour. Through genealogies of Institutional Pedagogy and the case study of the Centre for Possible Studies, I illustrated the ways in groups could be activated to dismantle existing working practices and to generate infrastructures that cross established, branded and built institutions that currently frame the work of culture. I considered how public programmes' focus on moments that are staged 'in public' elides the wider spectrum of conditions that permeate their existence. Spivak's notion of a practice of the 'uncoercive re-arrangement of desire'<sup>553</sup> was utilised to argue for a notion of institution that is malleable, convivial and liberatory and that attends to the lesser seen dimensions of public programming. The micropolitical, a term used throughout the thesis to denote attention to the details and unspoken elements of production, was elaborated upon to argue that uncomfortable moments at elevator doors, questions posed

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<sup>553</sup> Spivak, 'Righting Wrongs,' 526.

regarding the commitment of institutions to the issues they have staged highlight the points at which institutions recoil from the practice of thinking with conditions as well as the moments from which to determine new conditions of the possible. The tacit here was affirmed to be as important as the tactical, the unarticulated as much as the spoken and verbalised in the making of a public programming that analyses the wider social and political urgencies alongside conditions of the micro political instituting mechanisms of groups who come together to develop them.

In both of these chapters, I argued for a move away from modes of pretence in public programming toward thinking *with* the conditions we inhabit. Practices of organisation — though often eclipsed by more heroic narratives, I argue, are crucial to understanding how radical change can and does take place. By emphasising thinking with conditions, radical education praxes suggest a discipline of working through practices of thought, speech, affect, care and organization, questions of the so-called private *and* public spheres, questions of space *and* time, of questions of the material *and* the immaterial.

As I suggested in the introduction, this thesis is a modest and situated attempt to work thorough these propositions. As such there were a number areas that, due to the constrains of time and space associated with a PhD, I was not able to address. A first area is work on the concept of thinking with conditions in radical pedagogy more generally. There are many other genealogies - those of the American Indian Movement's Survival Schools, those of US civil rights movement, and the mutual school movement in France that provide more avenues and tools through which to develop the proposition of thinking with conditions more broadly.<sup>554</sup> In particular, the predominance in the literature of male voices and authors in radical pedagogical enquiry is important to note and interrogate within the genealogies I have presented. In future work, it would be important to look more directly at feminist pedagogies that inform community organising, and also the feminist perspectives that exist within and subsequent to the genealogies that I have presented. While I have touched upon the problems of historiography of radical pedagogy in this thesis, this area requires deeper archival investigation and oral history work. This suggests a path for future work from which to deepen our understanding of concepts like 'municipal housekeeping' and the 'expanded private sphere' and to think how radical pedagogy provides avenues for thinking the public and private spheres together.

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A second area for further enquiry is the question of the scalability of thinking with conditions. The groups and practices that I have described as those assembling around shared conditions in the present have generally been small. How do these groups, and groups of groups replace the magnitude that the discourse of the public sphere indicates? With more space and indeed more resources, I might have further analysed how to catalyse such groups of groups on a larger scale. How might public programming be re-organised to both catalyse and support small groups to engage in long term investigations of conditions, and also to convene groups to inform the themes engaged by cultural spaces, and to produce a more resistant infrastructure. Throughout this thesis, examples of the scalability of these practices - from the 'halfway houses' of the civil rights movement, to the hundreds of schools in the Ecole Modern and IP networks, to the massive popular education campaigns of Brazil, Nicaragua and Guinea Bissau, have suggested that practices of thinking with conditions, though emerging from small and localised groups can proliferate, both through the newly invented spaces born of struggles for liberation and through existing public infrastructures. There is much to learn about the intricacies of this movement in scale and much to bring to our current moment in which questions of scale and traction seem increasingly difficult to surmount. While I have had thoughts and at times experimented with this question of scale in my practice as a public programmer, there was not room in these pages to explore the broader implications of thinking with conditions at this level in the arts.

A final and related area of further enquiry lies in the implications of these genealogies and propositions for those engaged in public programming - as gallery workers, attendees, speakers, communities, cleaners etc. - in the present. While I have in recent months worked in collaborations with other researchers to engage public programming workers in discussion of the blocks and potentialities discussed in this thesis, there is more work to be done to instigate wider conversation and intervention about how public programmers can proliferate modes of thinking with conditions, how resources can be diverted, and how knowledges can be sought to alter the cultures of labour that surround public programming. For this research, we might look to genealogies of cultural work that have engaged such practices in the past - the community arts movement in the European context, the Third Cinema movement instigated by practitioners in the global south, the cultural programmes of settlement houses in urban centres in the early 20th century and policy initiatives like the 'culture points' and culturally

informed public health programmes in Brazil.<sup>555</sup> Thinking with conditions through these genealogies might instigate philosophical challenges to dominant notions of aesthetics, and organisational challenges to dominant modes of cultural production and policy making. Such genealogies give viable macropolitical examples of how cultural institutions and policy, might be profoundly altered to support re-shaped practices of public programming and cultural practices more broadly.

It is the case then that this thesis is modest in scope but ambitious in desire, a condition perhaps born of the genealogies I have described in it. Thinking with conditions can therefore be read as a cohabitation between what is felt and observed in the immediate and what can be collectively imagined, demanded and enacted beyond the horizon of the possible.

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