Unbuilding Infrastructure

Susannah Haslam and Tom Clark

Introduction

Infrastructure

Infrastructure can be thought of as the processes, functions, structures and hierarchies that construct and position various fields of activity in relation to wider socio-political frameworks, such as education, culture, communications, and enable them to function. But before they are realised in the familiar infrastructural objects and systems that make up functional and meaningful life, infrastructure leads a double existence — as plan and as condition. For example: admissions protocol in universities favour those with addressable skills; membership strata in museums order the visibility of access; permanently upgrade-able operating systems make for fungible cognitive maps. In infrastructure's realisation, objects, protocols and users are enfolded together as functioning *means* and *uses* in each infrastructural instance and encounter.

Following Susan Leigh Star and Karen Ruhleder, we ask not what infrastructure is, but instead, owing to its tendency to deny fixity in favour of being relational, *when* it is. When does something become an infrastructure, for whom and how? Further, how can we identify this moment?

The reader renders these questions through the physical, metaphorical, and functional worlds that infrastructure builds as it defines its own answer to them through the 'proper' use and users that animate it. With these parts in place, the reader takes on its invitation to find an annotation method and put it to work; using its texts to point towards the possibility of an alternative *when* as well as *what*; a modelling of space-time not premised on infinite infrastructural expansion and thus enclosure and certainty, but on a precise means of assembly points, slippages and breakages that engage such possibility.

Intervention on a field

The reader is an intervention on what can be referred to as 'the infrastructural'. We refer here to the disciplines and fields that formulate study of infrastructure ranging from Cybernetics and Systems Theory in the 1960s and '70s, Science and Technology Studies (/Society) in the 1990s, a more recent focus on both the materiality of infrastructure and its social effects, and to contemporary practices of the Curatorial as modes of epistemological consideration.

The infrastructural emerges spliced: as technologies have evolved during the past sixty years, manifesting in geopolitical, computational, social spheres, infrastructures have become resolute shapes and systems and feelings and dispositions to be utilised, occasionally

inhabited and rarely destroyed. Across this spectrum of forms, infrastructure appears as both a technical structure, which has social, material and mediating qualities and effects. As a ground on which activity takes place, these inherent qualities and effects can be said to create the conditions in which certain activities are possible and others are not.

Infrastructure's very nature is resolute, dogged; its visibility, comprehensibility, relies often on its breaking, and when it is fixed it more or less disappears. To study infrastructure feels like a game of cat and mouse, a matter of outwitting its matrix of intended figures — subjects, users, objects and organisations. With every technical update, the task of infrastructural theory falls into the pattern of constantly updating its accounts of these qualities and effects — hoping to present and expose its contradictions, hoping to enable wiser, more cautious or more cunning users; and yet how and why we rely on those qualities and effects remains somewhat out of reach.

While much study of technical systems and material assemblages and the spectra of feelings, dispositions, and shapes has offered a diagram for the infrastructural conditions through which that type of infrastructural life is built — an alternative approach to infrastructure comes into view. Exemplified in the work of Brian Larkin, Keller Easterling, Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, Ashley Carse et al., and featuring in this reader, it is the forms and figures, that the uses of infrastructure take as they animate and determine the relations between infrastructural objects and conditions. These are the surfaces on which we can see what is built when we build infrastructure. And yet, like all social-determining forms and institutions, infrastructural forms move through the constant maintenance and determination of an idea of 'proper' form; the forms, figures and metaphors which allow them to self sustain; forms, figures and metaphors to which those subjected to infrastructure must also be configured. Beyond the illumination of these surfaces alongside the materialities and systems that constitute infrastructure, the reader also therefore considers the construction and performative maintenance of such 'proper' forms within the worlds of infrastructural objects and organisation.

Using Jack Halberstam's proposition of *unbuilding* — a critical reading of Gordon Matta-Clark's contribution to the 1974 Anarchitecture works (anarchic, site-specific cuts into abandoned buildings) — as metaphorical and architectural device, this reader pursues and manipulates these forms and figures of infrastructural use through which infrastructure, as a plan and as conditions, can come to be treated *as* a *way* of life.

Halberstam and Unbuilding

The abstract and architectural metaphor of unbuilding is a tool for dis-arranging what a structure stands for and stands as.

In their text, 'Unbuilding Gender: Trans* Anarchitectures In and Beyond the Work of Gordon Matta-Clark', Halberstam reads Matta-Clark's anarchitectural experiments — specifically, in which he cut through a house from top to bottom, tilting one half outwards, balancing precariously, from the incision — as an act that interjects both the metaphorical form and functioning of the house as the site of domesticity. While the building can no longer materialise shelter as the ground on which the gendered space of the home is reproduced, the object is not quite destroyed. Instead, unbuilt and opaque to its original meaning, the structure of the house, though unstable, allows other meaning and possiblity into that space through that incision. Halberstam's target in the deployment of this unbuilding is the binary institution of gender, specifically as it has come to define the possibilities for trans embodiment, and the journeys of transition in non-definitive terms. As with the disarraying effect of Matta-Clark's anarchitectural cuts, Halberstam reclaims the disassembly and rebuilding of bodies, not to fix bodies which were never broken anyway, but to vindicate the possibilities of transition in all directions and forms: to unbuild the goal of gender and to make peace with those cuts so that all other possible embodiments can enter.

We propose to take Matta-Clark's cutting and Halberstam's unbuilding to infrastructure: not simply because of this shift to architecture, but because what is built as category — form — can also become the infrastructural ground on, and through, which to arrange objects against determining backgrounds,, sexuality. Halberstam refers here to Sara Ahmed's examination of how sexuality, premised by the same binary institution of gender, literally grounds itself, taking root; how heteronormativity comes to land through categorically establishing the refusal of what it is not and thereby in the (re)production of what it is. This delineating and limiting tendency simultaneously clears the ground of the refused, inhibiting possibility, therefore one form over another prevails in taking up space.

Taking Halberstam's use of *unbuilding* to the forms of infrastructure, urges a way of being with infrastructure open to the possibility of unknown and shimmering figures and forms. A way in which it is possible to be opaque to given infrastructure, whilst also able to slice through and self-institute new infrastructural worlds.

Annotation strategy

The reader can be seen to function as a configuration — from the latin configurare as the shaping of a thing after a pattern — it can also be read following what Karen Barad calls the act of cutting-together apart, as a slice through existing, but disparate, thinking on, of and about infrastructure to pull a field into resolution. Halberstam's call to Barad impresses the possibility of differentiation without full division, which helps us to clearly articulate how we arrive at the question of annotation.

Returning to the *re*configured cuts and incisions of Matta-Clark with Barad's cutting-together-apart, we can also develop a mode of annotation towards unbuilding. Rather than a mark on the surface of discourse, the annotation becomes a break in the repetition of infrastructural, then epistemological, certainties. It reinterprets infrastructure, not just as technical systems to be fixed, but as abstractions that build architectures / architectures that build abstractions. Where *unbuilding* is taken in its architectural sense, and loosely registering Matta-Clark's anarchitectural cuts, we move through *unbuilding* as a series of annotational interruptions, incisions, and disarticulations. Cutting into these aims to *unbuild* proper forms of infrastructure and infrastructural use. This annotation strategy intervenes at the point of *when* we can say something is infrastructure and therefore what *becomes* infrastructure.

Taking on Halberstam's proposition of *unbuilding* as a metaphor *for* intervening on the binary institution of gender, however, we also propose to *unbuild* a discourse on infrastructure. In Halberstam's refusal of gender, through its *de*configuration, we find the imperative to ask what might be left when we disarrange the very conditions that enable something like infrastructure to retain its function and meaning. A tool for registering what an infrastructural object and organisation stands for, and stands as, and for taking that down, *unbuilding* offers an alternative ontological and epistemological ground to the careful copying down of infrastructural form.

Where *unbuilding* is abstract and metaphorical, *unbuilding* again works as a metaphor to deconfigure, to unmarry texts as theoretical propositions, analyses, critique, readings and hybrid organisations, from their intended disciplinary contexts. That which is deconfigured, *unbuilt*, becomes up for grabs as *extradisciplinary* matter. In this way the reader reconfigures its texts in order to find alternative modes of engaging infrastructure as a critical capacity, an unbuilt means for staging and articulating that *extradisciplinary* matter.

What the reader does

With this reader then, we pose and address a series of questions with texts to engage the metaphor of unbuilding as a series of annotations on the field. These annotations-as-questions offer up one configuration of a method for unbuilding infrastructure. In this sense, the reader self-annotates according to an infrastructural logic. In its shaping of this movement in flight and definition, the process of the reader's materialisation has become the annotation onto 'the infrastructural'.

Both abstract and architectural, plan and condition, and anchored by the texts' engagement with aspects of art, design, policy and education, the reader sets a new ground for *unbuilding infrastructure*. These new renders of infrastructure could be policies, architectures, artistic

works, events, interventions repetitions etc., and which can ultimately be represented by a proxy object in and as this reader.

It is our intention to find ways and modes of cohering the material and symbolic conditions of what builds and unbuilds — makes possible — infrastructure and what infrastructure in turn builds and unbuilds; when this is often resolved in and through institutions (for example in disciplines, knowledges, powers), presently, we find that (de-) and (re-) configuring art, design, policy and education as an 'extradisciplinary' disposition of, simultaneously, defining a field of infrastructure and landing its critical capacities begins to do this.

Using the reader

The reader is structured via seven annotations. These can be used to navigate the reader as a configuration of texts, and as a model for *unbuilding*:

> 1, If the context for this reader proposes *institutions as a way of life*, then can we distinguish *infrastructure*s as a way of life?
> 2, What does infrastructure build?
> 3, How might we change infrastructure?
> 4, Where to start unbuilding infrastructure?
> 5, How might we unbuild: gestures towards a critical use of infrastructure.
> 6, The question of opacity and living with unbuilt infrastructures, and, how can we find ways of *being with* the disarrangements of infrastructure?
> 7, How can we apply this thinking to existing and substantiated infrastructural objects (such as the organisational — art, design, education and policy — structures of *adpe*)?

Each annotation is addressed through a series of extracts of texts that perform each moment of unbuilding, thus configuring a line through an alternative discourse of the infrastructural. In the reader, each extract is coupled with an introductory annotation as to how it unbuilds. Annotation seven takes the form as an appendix of existing infrastructural objects and organisations that we draw on to exemplify the potential application of unbuilding infrastructure.

The reader can be read like a user's manual for annotating, thinking about, and unbuilding infrastructure. The reader is one site on which to show how this annotation might be done; at the same time, it offers a plan to be taken beyond it. With these pieces in place, we hope that the reader offers a method for annotating and unbuilding infrastructure itself — whether physical, organisational, conceptual, practices, or for making claims on those infrastructures not yet there.

Reader

Annotation 1, If the context for this reader proposes *institutions as a way of life*, then can we distinguish *infrastructures* as a way of life?

Unbuilding begins with a recognition of a distinction, between the forming of an idea or plan, and its becoming an architecture, ground or condition.

Both infrastructure and institutions build, and are built through the maintenance and realisation of metaphors that define and repeat social forms that shape our lives. Infrastructural forms are, as Brain Larkin writes, equally political as those institutions of knowledge and power which long concerned Michel Foucault. Differentiation is tricky, however. For instance, the forms taken by institutional and infrastructure sometimes overlap (like 'education'), are sometimes represented or stand in for the same thing (like the 'lab'). In imaging the lab as a model space for education, we call a specific set of objects to mind: in imaging the 'critical' 'media' 'lab' in Basel, Switzerland, as part of the Institute of Experimental Design and Media Cultures in the Academy of Art and Design, University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland, we might move from the periodic table of its elements to the infrastructure that reproduce the aspirations bound up in that label in its various users, from students to staff. Euroboxes, soundproofing curtains and temporary walls, transience, productivity, criticality. But in the different ways those metaphors, forms or figures are achieved, we can spy a difference. Here, we call on:

Illich, Ivan, 'Institutional Spectrum', in *Deschooling Society* (London: Marion Boyars, 1970) <https://monoskop.org/images/1/17/Illich_Ivan_Deschooling_Society.pdf> pp. 53-7

Larkin, Brian, 'Promising Forms: The Political Aesthetics of Infrastructure', in *The Promise of Infrastructure* (Duke University Press, 2018) <https://comparativemedia.columbia.edu/sites/default/files/Promising%20Forms%20-%20The%20Political%20Aesthetics%20of%20Infrastructure.pdf> pp. 175-8

By situating, categorising and delineating forms of institutionality and instituting (telephone link-ups, subway lines, mail routes, public markets, to law enforcement, the military, jails) on a scale between convivial and manipulative institutions, Illich's 'Institutional Spectrum' also offers ways of breaking with them. While the definitive way in which this helps to categorise such forms of institutionality within a socio-political field, it's outcome-oriented approach can help us to think about how infrastructure might create similar effects. For Brian Larkin,

the materialist turn, through which much of infrastructure studies has been carried out, has offered important insight into the specific effects of the objects and organisational principles of infrastructure. It is, however, key that their formal and aesthetic dimensions be brought back into connection with our understanding of their systems. Infrastructure for Larkin materialises the political decisions that have lead to their construction and realisation in the first place.

port a life of action than on our developing new ideologies and technologies. We need a set of criteria which will permit us to recognize those institutions which support personal growth rather than addiction, as well as the will to invest our technological resources preferentially in such institutions of growth.

The choice is between two radically opposed institutional types, both of which are exemplified in certain existing institutions, although one type so characterizes the contemporary period as to almost define it. This dominant type I would propose to call the manipulative institution. The other type also exists, but only precariously. The institutions which fit it are humbler and less noticeable; yet I take them as models for a more desirable future. I call them "convivial" and suggest placing them at the left of an institutional spectrum, both to show that there are institutions which fall between the extremes and to illustrate how historical institutions can change color as they shift from facilitating activity to organizing production.

Generally, such a spectrum, moving from left to right, has been used to characterize men and their ideologies, not our social institutions and their styles. This categorization of men, whether as individuals or in groups, often generates more heat than light. Weighty objections can be raised against using an ordinary convention in an unusual fashion, but by doing so I hope to shift the terms of the discussion from a sterile to a fertile plane. It will become evident that men of the left are not always characterized by their opposition to the manipulative institutions, which I locate to the right on the spectrum.

The most influential modern institutions crowd up at the right of the spectrum. Law enforcement has moved there, as it has shifted from the hands of the sheriff to those of the FBI and the Pentagon. Modern warfare has become a highly professional enterprise whose business is killing. It has reached the point where its efficiency is measured in body counts. Its peace-keeping potential depends on its ability to convince friend and foe of the nation's unlimited death-dealing power. Modern bullets and chemicals are so effective that a few cents' worth, properly delivered to the intended "client," unfailingly kill or maim. But delivery

costs rise vertiginously; the cost of a dead Vietnamese went from $360,000 in 1967 to $450,000 in 1969. Only economies on a scale approaching race suicide would render modern warfare economically efficient. The boomerang effect in war is becoming more obvious: the higher the body count of dead Vietnamese, the more enemies the United States acquires around the world; likewise, the more the United States must spend to create another manipulative institution—cynically dubbed "pacification"—in a futile effort to absorb the side effects of war.

At this same extreme on the spectrum we also find social agencies which specialize in the manipulation of their clients. Like the military, they tend to develop effects contrary to their aims as the scope of their operations increases. These social institutions are equally counterproductive, but less obviously so. Many assume a therapeutic and compassionate image to mask this paradoxical effect. For example, jails, up until two centuries ago, served as a means of detaining men until they were sentenced, maimed, killed, or exiled, and were sometimes deliberately used as a form of torture. Only recently have we begun to claim that locking people up in cages will have a beneficial effect on their character and behavior. Now quite a few people are beginning to understand that jail increases both the quality and the quantity of criminals, that, in fact, it often creates them out of mere nonconformists. Far fewer people, however, seem to understand that mental hospitals, nursing homes, and orphan asylums do much the same thing. These institutions provide their clients with the destructive self-image of the psychotic, the overaged, or the waif, and provide a rationale for the existence of entire professions, just as jails produce income for wardens. Membership in the institutions found at this extreme of the spectrum is achieved in two ways, both coercive: by forced commitment or by selective service.

At the opposite extreme of the spectrum lie institutions distinguished by spontaneous use—the "convivial" institutions. Telephone link-ups, subway lines, mail routes, public markets and exchanges do not require hard or soft sells to induce their clients to use them. Sewage systems, drinking water, parks, and side-

walks are institutions men use without having to be institutionally convinced that it is to their advantage to do so. Of course, all institutions require some regulation. But the operation of institutions which exist to be used rather than to produce something requires rules of an entirely different nature from those required by treatment-institutions, which are manipulative. The rules which govern institutions for use have mainly the purpose of avoiding abuses which would frustrate their general accessibility. Sidewalks must be kept free of obstructions, the industrial use of drinking water must be held within limits, and ball playing must be restricted to special areas within a park. At present we need legislation to limit the abuse of our telephone lines by computers, the abuse of mail service by advertisers, and the pollution of our sewage systems by industrial wastes. The regulation of convivial institutions sets limits to their use; as one moves from the convivial to the manipulative end of the spectrum, the rules progressively call for unwilling consumption or participation. The different cost of acquiring clients is just one of the characteristics which distinguish convivial from manipulative institutions.

At both extremes of the spectrum we find service institutions, but on the right the service is imposed manipulation, and the client is made the victim of advertising, aggression, indoctrination, imprisonment, or electroshock. On the left the service is amplified opportunity within formally defined limits, while the client remains a free agent. Right-wing institutions tend to be highly complex and costly production processes in which much of the elaboration and expense is concerned with convincing consumers that they cannot live without the product or the treatment offered by the institution. Left-wing institutions tend to be networks which facilitate client-initiated communication or cooperation.

The manipulative institutions of the right are either socially or psychologically "addictive." Social addiction, or escalation, consists in the tendency to prescribe increased treatment if smaller quantities have not yielded the desired results. Psychological addiction, or habituation, results when consumers become

hooked on the need for more and more of the process or product. The self-activated institutions of the left tend to be self-limiting. Unlike production processes which identify satisfaction with the mere act of consumption, these networks serve a purpose beyond their own repeated use. An individual picks up the telephone when he wants to say something to someone else, and hangs up when the desired communication is over. He does not, teen-agers excepted, use the telephone for the sheer pleasure of talking into the receiver. If the telephone is not the best way to get in touch, people will write a letter or take a trip. Right-wing institutions, as we can see clearly in the case of schools, both invite compulsively repetitive use and frustrate alternative ways of achieving similar results.

Toward, but not at, the left on the institutional spectrum, we can locate enterprises which compete with others in their own field, but have not begun notably to engage in advertising. Here we find hand laundries, small bakeries, hairdressers, and—to speak of professionals—some lawyers and music teachers. Characteristically left of center, then, are self-employed persons who have institutionalized their services but not their publicity. They acquire clients through their personal touch and the comparative quality of their services.

Hotels and cafeterias are somewhat closer to the center. The big chains like Hilton—which spend huge amounts on selling their image—often behave as if they were running institutions of the right. Yet Hilton and Sheraton enterprises do not usually offer anything more—in fact, they often give less—than similarly priced, independently managed lodgings. Essentially, a hotel sign beckons to a traveler in the manner of a road sign. It says, "Stop, here is a bed for you," rather than, "You should prefer a hotel bed to a park bench!"

The producers of staples and most perishable consumer goods belong in the middle of our spectrum. They fill generic demands and add to the cost of production and distribution whatever the market will bear in advertising costs for publicity and special packaging. The more basic the product—be it goods or services—the more does competition tend to limit the sales cost of the item.

Most manufacturers of consumer goods have moved much further to the right. Both directly and indirectly, they produce demands for accessories which boost real purchase price far beyond production cost. General Motors and Ford produce means of transportation, but they also, and more importantly, manipulate public taste in such a way that the need for transportation is expressed as a demand for private cars rather than public buses. They sell the desire to control a machine, to race at high speeds in luxurious comfort, while also offering the fantasy at the end of the road. What they sell, however, is not just a matter of uselessly big motors, superfluous gadgetry, or the new extras forced on the manufacturers by Ralph Nader and the clean-air lobbyists. The list price includes souped-up engines, air-conditioning, safety belts, and exhaust controls; but other costs not openly declared to the driver are also involved: the corporation's advertising and sales expenses, fuel, maintenance and parts, insurance, interest on credit, as well as less tangible costs like loss of time, temper, and breathable air in our traffic-congested cities.

An especially interesting corollary to our discussion of socially useful institutions is the system of "public" highways. This major element of the total cost of automobiles deserves lengthier treatment, since it leads directly to the rightist institution in which I am most interested, namely, the school.

False Public Utilities

The highway system is a network for locomotion across relatively large distances. As a network, it appears to belong on the left of the institutional spectrum. But here we must make a distinction which will clarify both the nature of highways and the nature of true public utilities. Genuinely all-purpose roads are true public utilities. Superhighways are private preserves, the cost of which has been partially foisted upon the public.

Telephone, postal, and highway systems are all networks, and none of them is free. Access to the telephone network is limited by time charges on each call. These rates are relatively small and

7

Promising Forms: The Political Aesthetics of Infrastructure

BRIAN LARKIN

Infrastructures, as technical objects, take on form. Once something exists—say a road or an electric plant—we are not just in the domain of matter but of technological ensembles that are enformed as they are brought into material existence. In the study of infrastructures, form is both ubiquitously visible yet absent from analytic consideration. However, it is the interface through which humans engage with technologies and is part of the reciprocal interchange between humans and machines. Form is thus a *relation* between humans and technology as well as a thing in itself, the medium where infrastructure and user meet. There can be no technics without form, yet it is separate from those technics, participating in a paradigmatic chain of relations with previous forms, their aesthetic histories, and the epistemic worlds that come with them.

Form leads us to the question of political aesthetics—the way that aesthetics, broadly conceived, establishes a political force enabling and contesting various kinds of authority that circulate in the world. Political rationalities are fashioned, made palpable, and disseminated through concrete semiotic and aesthetic vehicles oriented to addressees. The literary theorist Sianne Ngai, for instance, argues that we exist "in a culture that hails us as aesthetic subjects nearly every minute of the day" (2012: 23). This aesthetic address is as much a part of an electricity switchbox, the tangle of cables strung across a street, or the sound of a generator, as it is an attribute of literature or art. It is certainly the case that infrastructures are material assemblages caught up in political formations whose power in society derives from their technical functions. But they also operate aesthetically, and their aesthetic address constitutes a form of political action that is linked to, but differs from, their material operations. And political aesthetics is one way that we can understand the promise of infrastructures.

Considering the promise of infrastructure allows us to explore the ways in which infrastructures compress within them different operations and allows

us to focus on nontechnical as well as technical dimensions of infrastructure. Elsewhere (Larkin 2013), I discussed this through the idea of the poetics of infrastructure, drawing on Roman Jakobson's famous parsing of the multiple functions embedded in speech acts. Infrastructures share this compound nature, the potential to operate in different ways and on multiple levels. At times it is their material operations that dominate, the ability to provide electric power, dispose of waste, or create a system for the movement of goods by containers. At other times, as Achille Mbembe and Janet Roitman (1995) have argued, the technical function of infrastructural projects (whether they operate or not) is subordinate to their role in creating a means to transfer public money into private hands. At still other points, governments, leaders, and parties fund infrastructural projects for their sign value, evidence of the ability of parties of the former left to modernize by entering into public-private partnerships, or of municipal authorities to show their commitment to a green, environmental future, or of states to develop society. In the first of these examples, it is the material nature of the infrastructure and its technical function that is paramount. In the second, materiality is a screen for the financial agreements that lie behind it and that transduce technical things into economic things (Mbembe 2001). The last example emphasizes the address of infrastructure. When infrastructure operates in each of these modes it draws together different sets of actors and generates distinctive sorts of political effects.

In this chapter I explore the relation between infrastructure and political aesthetics. I focus on the ways that infrastructures address people as well as move things, how they are composed of form as well as materials. Infrastructures participate in what Jacques Rancière (2006; 2009) refers to as *poiesis*, the act of bringing something into being in the world by creating a way of doing and making, and *aisthesis*, how it is those things produce modes of felt experience. These qualities define infrastructures just as much as art objects, for infrastructures are always fantastic as well as technical objects. They are made up of desire as much as concrete or steel and to separate off these dimensions is to miss out on the powerful ways they are consequential for our world.

Infrastructures, as Stephen Kern (1983) has argued, contribute to our sense of being in time, feeling cut off from the flow of history, attached to the past, isolated in the present, or rushing toward a future.[1] They address the people who use them, stimulating emotions of hope and pessimism, nostalgia and desire, frustration and anger that constitute promise (and its failure) as an emotive and political force (see Gupta; Harvey; and Schenkel, this volume). They express forms of rule and help constitute subjects in relation to that rule, draw-

176   Brian Larkin

ing on those measures of hope and pessimism to gain force. Aesthetics are also part of the ambient life that infrastructures give rise to—the tactile ways in which we hear, smell, feel as we move through the world. Political aesthetics refers to both these representational and experiential qualities. Instead of a split between the material and the discursive, or the nonhuman and human, political aesthetics sutures the material and the figural, showing how both are engaged in a constant reciprocal exchange. They make the distribution of rule visible as an aesthetic act. This is why infrastructures are often objects around which political debates coalesce. They are reflexive points where the present state and future possibilities of government and society are held up for public assessment. The promise of infrastructure refers to this political compact, and political aesthetics makes visible the governmental promise of infrastructure as a reflexive, politically charged thing.

Materiality

The rising interest in infrastructure in the social sciences and humanities is part of the more general turn toward materiality (Latour 1993; Bennett 2010; Coole and Frost 2010). Materiality is often taken to be the 'ground' of an object, its most basic, originary condition before the object is caught up into higher levels of discursive meaning. Adrian Mackenzie (2002), for instance, splits the analysis of technology into "layers." One layer is a higher order of meaning in which technology is treated as a historically situated discursive entity representing ideas such as progress or civilization. For Mackenzie, however, there is a second, more fundamental layer that "strongly resists reduction to discourses" (2002: 5).

At this level, technology, Mackenzie argues, is the precondition of thinking, representing, and making sense, not an epiphenomenon of it. There is a causal relation in which the technical is autonomous from and anterior to the discursive which it conditions. Thomas Lemke summarizes this position: "The material turn criticizes the idea of the natural world and technical artifacts as a mere resource or raw material for technological progress, economic production or social construction" (2015: 3). As Jane Bennett puts it, vibrant matter has a life force of its own and "is *not* the raw material for the creative activity of humans" (2010: xiii, emphasis in original). Infrastructures, in this sense, may be introduced as part of a socialist five-year plan, evidence for the superiority of private enterprise over government intervention, or revelatory of the power of Pentecostal churches to remake the temporal (and spiritual) world. But politics, economy, and religion, in this line of argument, represent socially organized

discursive realities separate from the primary material level. Conditioned by technics, they cannot themselves condition the technical.

One consequence of the new materialism is to counterpose the material to form, or at least to certain definitions of form. If the problem of Aristotelian hylomorphism was that Aristotle saw form as something imprinted upon matter, reducing matter to a passive receptacle without any agency, materialism has maintained this split while reversing its hierarchy, placing the material as primary.[2] This is why the material turn prefers "unformed" synonyms—matter, material, objects, things—which describe substances in their amorphous, "unformed," elemental state. Infrastructures have an elective affinity with this conception as they are so frequently seen to be a primary technology upon which form is constructed. The infrastructure of a house, for instance, is its wires and pipes, sheet rock and steel, that delimit and make possible the "form" that is laid on top. There is a linear relation here. Infrastructure is primary; form, secondary.

My problem with this split is that it makes it difficult to develop a conception of political aesthetics and form's role in those aesthetics. When I use the term "form," I am drawing on the literary theoretical sense of the imposition of conventional meaning through the formal arrangement of signs. It is about a set of properties a thing possesses—rhyme, rhythm, stress, and meter in poetry; chiaroscuro lighting and oblique angles in film noir; minimalist aesthetics and lack of iconic representation in abstract art and so on. And it is about the sensory effect of those properties on the readers and viewers who engage them.

While I have great sympathy for the emphasis on the essential technicity of the human body and human collectives, I do not see the need to split the technical and the symbolic, insisting on two distinct realms arranged in hierarchical and causal relation rather than as mutually structuring. It also risks fundamentally misrecognizing the range of ways in which infrastructures address, order, and constitute political relations splitting the study of technics from aesthetics and desire rather than seeing these as mutually constitutive. If objects are thought to possess a vital force operating at a level prior to or below consciousness they cannot be theorized in terms of desire, intention, ideology, need, emotion, fantasy, or form—as this would turn infrastructures into what Bennett dismisses as "thoroughly instrumentalized matter" (2010: ix). The promise of infrastructure, however, refers to a political rationality, made up of expectation, desire, temporal deferral, sacrifice, and frustration that takes us into the realm of discursive meaning.

My aim in this chapter is to explore the political aesthetics of infrastructure not through close ethnographic analysis but through a more general theoretical account, moving through a range of examples that draw out the implications

178   Brian Larkin

Annotation 2, What does infrastructure build?

If unbuilding has led us to consider *how* infrastructure might build, unbuilding infrastrucuttre then next requires pinpointing *what* infrastructure builds?

Infrastructure, it is said, is the material and organisational ground on which other activities take place. Here, the inherent qualities and effects described in theory are said to create the conditions in which certain activities are possible and others are not. To achieve itself as a condition of possibility, infrastructure must habituate itself. As Nigel Thrift writes, quoting Lauren Berlant, infrastructure must be seen to be repeatable, with that repetition as its aim. It must create users who anticipate those conditions, perform its plan, and conjure its function. Not only building functional conditions then, infrastructure also builds worlds in which the outcomes of those functions can be expected when its conditions are met and its plans are enacted. Here we can see this in:

Easterling, Keller, 'Disposition', in *Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space* (London: Verso, 2014) <https://www.versobooks.com/books/2163-extrastatecraft> pp. 71-3 (see also: p. 21)

In its capacity to metaphor the relationship between the materiality of infrastructure and the symbolic, via a series of undercurrents and spirits who shape and shimmer both plan and condition. Easterling's 'Disposition' moves away from apparatus and instead gestures towards something potentially fugitive, another type of life for infrastructure.

Rogoff, Irit, 'Infrastructure' (presented at the Documents, Constellations, Prospects, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin: Former West, 2013) <https://formerwest.org/DocumentsConstellationsProspects/Contributions/Infrastructure> (see also: 'Looking Away: Participations in Visual Culture', in *After Criticism: New Responses to Art and Performance* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005) <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9780470774243.ch6>)

'We think of infrastructure as enabling, we think that it is an advantageous set of circumstances through which we might redress the wrongs of the world, to redress the balance of power within a post-slavery, postcolonial, post-communist world of endless war. This redress is always a binding of representation enfolded within the structures of a seemingly dignifying infrastructure. We see this across a broad spectrum whether this be an inclusion of a discussion of slavery in the protocols of the UN ("World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance," Durban, 2001) or the inclusion of a neglected and invisible artistic tradition such as art from the Arab world into the schedule of an august western institution such as the Museum of Modern Art (Without

Boundary: Seventeen Ways of Looking, New York, 2006). But whatever the position, there is a sense that the incorporation of this work into the ultimate infrastructure [of our time]—*political, cultural, or technocratic—that ignored its very existence for so long, is a benchmark, a contested one, but definitely a benchmark of a seeming change in attitudes.'* In its redressing of existing, and framing of alternative, notions of addressability, which might transform infrastructure from technology to critical capacity, Rogoff gestures to an affective render of infrastructure.

Carse, Ashley, 'Nature as Infrastructure: Making and Managing the Panama Canal Watershed', *Social Studies of Science*, 2012 <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0306312712440166> pp. 540-1

Carse addresses how it is possible to create the conditions (policy, land-use practice, political pressures) in which nature can become an infrastructure, or become of infrastructure, as well as a function, and managed for a particular activity.

Disposition

Highways, first promoted with stories about freedom and uninterrupted movement, possessed an organizational logic that actually caused congestion. ARPAnet, first characterized as a stealth network for the military, lent itself to the kinds of exchanges that finally generated the internet. Promises of decentralization accompanied the first electrical utilities, just as promises of open access have accompanied contemporary broadband networks. Yet both networks, at certain junctures in their evolution, have sponsored constricting monopolies, whether scattered or centralized. The mass-produced suburbs sold unique country homes but delivered the virtually identical products of an assembly-line organization. Facebook, a platform created for social networking on a college campus, revealed another initially unrecognized potential when, in the Arab Spring, it was used as an instrument of dissent. Likewise the zone, created and promoted as a tool of free trade and economic liberalism, has often produced closed, exurban enclaves.

In all these cases, some of the most consequential political outcomes of infrastructure space remain undeclared in the dominant stories that portray them. Information resides in the technologies—from telecommunications to construction—as well as in the declared intent or story—from decentralization to stealth. Yet information also resides in a complex of countless other factors and activities. All these activities, taken together, lend the organization some other agency or capacity—a disposition—that often escapes detection or explanation.

Reading disposition in infrastructure space is like Twain's reading of the water's surface. The shiny new technology or the persuasive promotional story may command attention just like the pretty landscapes of the river, but in excess of that material, spatial organizations are always providing information about

their inherent, if undeclared, activities. While beyond complete comprehension, disposition describes something of what the organization is doing—activities that may diverge from the stated intent. This misalignment with the story or rhetoric is one means of detecting disposition, but additional organizational attributes are also helpful in assessing it.

Perhaps the idea of disposition is not really so mysterious. A ball at the top of an inclined plane possesses a disposition.[1] The geometry of the ball and its relative position are the simple markers of potential agency. Even without rolling down the incline, the ball is actively doing something by occupying its position. Disposition, in common parlance, usually describes an unfolding relationship between potentials. It describes a tendency, activity, faculty, or property in either beings or objects—a propensity within a context.

Infrastructure space possesses disposition just as does the ball at the top of an incline. Few would look at a highway interchange, an electrical grid, or a suburb and perceive agency or activity in its static arrangement. Spaces and urban organizations are usually treated, not as actors, but as collections of objects or volumes. Activity might be assigned only to the moving cars, the electrical current, or the suburb's inhabitants. Yet the ball does not have to roll down the incline to have the capacity to do so, and physical objects in spatial arrangements, however static, also possess an agency that resides in relative position. Disposition is immanent, not in the moving parts, but in the relationships between the components.

When navigating the complex dispositions of a river, dimples or ripples on the water serve as markers; and when navigating or hacking the complex dispositions of infrastructure, some simple markers are equally useful. The infrastructural operating system is filled with well-rehearsed sequences of code—spatial products and repeatable formulas like zones, suburbs, highways, resorts, malls, or golf courses. Hacking into it requires forms that are also like

software. Different from the object forms of masterpiece buildings or master plans, these active forms operate in another gear or register, to act like bits of code in the system. Active forms are markers of disposition, and disposition is the character of an organization that results from the circulation of these active forms within it. Since these forms are always changing, as is the complexion of disposition, they cannot be catalogued as elemental building blocks or terms in a glossary. Rather, identifying just a few among the many active forms that might be manipulated, redesigned, or rewritten only begins to crack the code, making more palpable the dispositions they inflect and providing some instruments for adjusting political character in infrastructure space. Still, as signs of ongoing processes—like the ripples used for river navigation—the practicality of these forms relies on their indeterminacy.

An important diagnostic in the fluid politics of extrastatecraft, disposition uncovers accidental, covert, or stubborn forms of power—political chemistries and temperaments of aggression, submission, or violence—hiding in the folds of infrastructure space.

Active Forms

Multiplier

A field of mass-produced suburban houses is a common phenomenon in infrastructure space, and it is an organization with clear markers of disposition. In the case of the US suburb of Levittown, the developer did not set out to make 1,000 individual houses, but adopted a kind of agricultural method of house building—1,000 slabs, 1,000 frames, 1,000 roofs, and so on. The site was effectively an assembly line separating the tasks of house building into smaller activities each of which could be applied across the entire population of houses in sequence. Beyond the activity of the humans within it, the arrangement itself rendered some things significant and others insignificant. The organization was actively *doing something* when it directed urban routines. It made some things possible and some things impossible (e.g., the building of an individual house different from all the others).

---

1   François Jullien, *The Propensity of Things: Toward a History of Efficacy in China* (New York: Zone Books, 1995), 29.

Exposing evidence of the infrastructural operating system is as important as acquiring some special skills to hack into it. Interspersed between evidentiary chapters are more contemplative chapters. Ranging more freely over other examples of infrastructure like rail, internet, and mass-produced suburbs, these chapters dwell on an expanded repertoire of form-making, history-telling, and activism. Together they consider the art of designing interplay between spatial variables—an interplay powerful enough to leverage the politics of extrastatecraft.

Mark Twain, once a steamboat captain on the Mississippi, developed techniques for navigating the river. While the passengers saw "pretty pictures" of landscape scenes, he was extracting information from the changing "face of the water." A little ripple, eddy, or "faint dimple" signaled turbulence or obstacles in a complex and potentially dangerous organization below the surface. These were markers of unfolding potentials or inherent agency in the river—what can only be called its *disposition*. Disposition is the character or propensity of an organization that results from all its activity. It is the medium, not the message. It is not the pattern printed on the fabric but the way the fabric floats. It is not the shape of the game piece but the way the game piece plays. It is not the text but the constantly updating software that manages the text. Not the object form, but the active form.

For each technology in infrastructure space, to distinguish between what the organization is saying and what it is doing—the pretty landscape versus the fluid dynamics of the river—is to read the difference between a declared intent and an underlying disposition. The activities of a technology may be difficult to see even though, given the ubiquity of infrastructure space, they are hidden in plain sight. Examining each one, each active form—like each dimple or ripple on the water or each bit of code in the software—makes it more palpable. Detecting and developing the active forms that shape disposition is an essential skill of the urbanist in infrastructure space, and it is the topic of a chapter following the discussion of free zones.

Examining the power of the stories, persuasions, or ideologies that accompany a technology also helps in detecting

FORMER WEST

KEYNOTE LECTURE INFRASTRUCTURE
Irit Rogoff
20 March 2013

When we in the West, or in the industrialized, technologized countries, congratulate ourselves on having an infrastructure—functioning institutions, systems of classification and categorization, archives and traditions and professional training for these, funding and educational pathways, excellence criteria,

on the hallowed eighteenth-century staircase. This invasion of a stiff and formal, traditional academic space by the floating population of art world openings was surprising enough to someone like myself, having studied at the Institute at an earlier phase. Instead of being hung in the more conventional spaces of the adjacent Courtauld Galleries, the works here were distributed among the offices and seminar rooms of the Institute itself and the viewers were asked to explore the spaces that are usually occupied by the business of teaching and of academic work, spaces cordoned off by the work being done in them and barred from the view of the general public. More surprising than this invited invasion, however, was the comment I overheard again and again as I trudged up and down the stairs "Well," said various visitors that evening, "it's not so posh, I expected it to be a lot more posh, didn't you?" "What's all the fuss about this place?" said another, "It's just an old building, isn't it?" ending his statement on a slightly puzzled questioning tone, as if wondering if there was some level of the experience that had been hidden to him. I, who, as a student, had for years been intimidated by this place and by its snobberies and exclusivities, was endlessly amused – it was as if the Queen had opened her bedrooms to the public and everyone had come around to share in the exposure of something that had so far been hidden. But beyond the voyeurism and beyond my own amusement, at a more interesting level, a form of participation was taking place in which some façade of privilege, of class and cultural exclusion, of supposedly rarefied learning, had been breached and the viewers were trying to figure out what exactly had kept them outside, had kept them at bay – since after all "it wasn't all that posh, was it?"

The exhibition project on display itself probably had in mind some notion of "democratization" and "accessibility" through undoing the boundaries of elevated separation and inserting itself in the realm of the "contemporary." Its final effects, however, were almost the opposite: rather than making people feel comfortable within its spaces, it produced – in my reading of it at least – an embodied manifestation of the mythical and fantasmatic which kept them at a distance. It did so, not through curatorial intention, but through a proliferation of performative acts generated by the audience and, of course, by our ever-growing ability to read these performative acts. There is a popular assumption that the performance of exclusion is an actual form of remaining outside, of not daring to enter spaces perceived as exclusive or intimidating or barred. Perhaps, though, the performance of exclusion is the process of realization that exclusion

has nothing to do with entrance or access and far more to do with perceptions of the possible. In the tortuous operations of trying to produce a fit between specific identities and their legible representations, the joyous possibilities of Giorgio Agamben's "whatever," which I shall return to in greater detail later, are lost to us.[8] The "whatever" in question here, says Agamben, relates to singularity not in its indifference with respect to a common property (to a concept, for example: being red, being French, being Muslim) but only in its being such as it is.[9] In the experience of the actual space, in being positioned as an actual audience, the crowd at the Courtauld exited the work of framed identities, in relation to which they are positioned, and judged themselves and moved into the performative workings of the "whatever." Thus it is experiential, not in the sense of having an actual embodied and shared experience in the space, but rather in the sense that entering a space inscribed with so many caveats and qualifications, in a state of what I call "unbelonging," leads to the active production of questions concerning the very rights of entry and belonging. It is in this sense that I would perceive it as an embodied manifestation of the mythical and fantasmatic that kept the audience entering the Courtauld that evening at a cultural distance in the first place. It is in this moment, in the preliminary production of these questions, that I wish to recognize the shift from entering to taking part, from following the roles allotted to us as viewers and listeners, to engaging in the performative and becoming the subject of the work itself.

In expanding the parameters of what constitutes engagement with art, we might in fact be entertaining an expanded notion of the very nature of participation, of taking part in and of itself. We all believe in the principle of participation. From the institutions of parliamentary democracy we sustain to the practices of listening to, rather than silencing or ignoring, the voices of children, women, minorities, or the handicapped that we take part in, we all uphold and approve the rhetorics of expanded participation as they circulate in political culture. What we rarely question is what constitutes the listening, hearing, or seeing in and of itself – the good intentions of recognition become a substitute for the kind of detailed analysis which might serve to expand the notions of what constitutes a mode of speaking in public, of being heard by a public, of having a public *manifestation.*

Of course one of the main issues within this structure is that the question posed in the name of expanded participation – whatever that question might be – is inevitably articulated at the centers of power, and it is

singularity of attention that the work traditionally demands (a friend tells of never being able to get into a museum's exhibits because he always seems to get waylaid by the bookstore; another friend spends longer talking about the different coffees in the museum's cafeteria than about the exhibit that generated the visit in the first instance).

Beyond Benjamin's notion of the "aura" with its combined understanding of how uniqueness and value mutually constitute one another through the production of a third entity – the work of art imbued with a halo of splendidness – we have to think of what actively separates the work from everything else that takes place around it. In this context I would have to briefly and tediously insist on the difference between the project of contextualizing art, of embedding it in social and other histories as appropriate frameworks for the production of meaning (a largely academic and scholarly project which galvanizes both archival materials and methodological analyses to provide frames for reading works) and that of attending to the performative gestures which I have in mind and which work to undo those very frames. I am referring to those moments in which people come together to unconsciously perform an alternative relation to culture, through their dress, or speech, or conduct. These performative gestures offer both a disruption and the possibility of an alternative and less obvious set of links with its surroundings, links which may be quite arbitrary or coincidental to the trajectories of immanent meanings. Of these, the most insistent separations between bodies of work and their surroundings come about through two sets of beliefs. Firstly, an overriding belief in the singularity of the work of art and, secondly, a belief in the cultural habits of affording it, that singular work, our unfragmented attention. Therefore we have to unravel both concepts of "singularity" and those of "undivided attention" in order to rework the relations between art and its audiences through strategies of concentration.

To unpack "singularity" I am using Giorgio Agamben's argument in *The Coming Community*, a series of linked essays that asks how we can conceive of a human community that lays no claims to identity, and that can be formed of singularities that refuse any criteria of belonging. How can we think a community whose collective basis is neither the shared ideological principles nor the empathies of affinity and similarity? The coming community, Agamben writes,

> is whatever being . . . The Whatever in question here relates to singularity
> not in its indifference with respect to a common property (to a concept, for

example: being red, being French, being Muslim), but only in it's being *such as it is*. Singularity is thus freed from the false dilemma that obliges knowledge to choose between the ineffability of the individual and the intelligibility of the universal. The intelligible, according to a beautiful expression of Levi ben Gershon (Gersonides), is neither a universal nor an individual included in a series but rather "singularity insofar as it is whatever singularity." In this conception, such-and-such being is reclaimed from having this or that property, which identifies it as belonging to this or that set, to this or that class (the reds, the French, the Muslims) – and it is reclaimed not for another class nor for the simple generic absence of any belonging, but for its being-*such*, for belonging itself. Thus being-*such*, which remains constantly hidden in the condition of belonging . . . and which is in no way a real predicate, comes to light itself: The singularity exposed as such is whatever you *want*, that is, lovable.[20]

Yve Lomax, in unshackling photography from being either the representation of a single reality or the manifestation of a singular practice, says,

Photography is mixed up with all sorts of things – law and order, the family, the medical professions, the art market. Photography is involved in a diversity of practices, stories and theories. There is painting in photography. There are words in photography. There is sexuality in photography. There is money in photography. There are a host of different "photographies." When we start with photography we are already in the middle of quite a few things. Indeed, we may argue that there is no such thing (in itself) as Photography, only photographies.[21]

Between Yve Lomax's pluralities and Agamben's notion of the "whatever" (which, for the sake of clarity, is not the "whatever" of California teenagers in which anything can be substituted by anything else, more a distrust of speech) we have a joint project of decentering – not the repeated movement of return to a narrowing enclosure, but the introduction of a logic of movement at whose core is a non-epistemic, or, perhaps better, a counter-epistemic, arbitrariness. By this I mean an epistemological equivalent of Agamben's "whatever" in which both the *what* we know and the *how* we know it are fluid entities that settle in different areas according to the dictates of the moment but receive equal amounts of attention and concentration regardless of their recognition or status in the world of knowledge.

Agamben continues:

Whatever is the figure of pure singularity. Whatever singularity has no identity, it is not determinate with respect to a concept, but neither is it simply indeterminate; rather it is determined only through its relation to an idea, that is, to the totality of its possibilities. Through this relation, as Kant said, singularity borders all possibility and thus receives its *omnimoda determinatio* not from its participation in a determinate concept or some actual property (being red, Italian, Communist) but only by means of this bordering.[22]

Thus the singularity of "art" is disrupted by a decentring dynamic, broken up by the plurality of its possibilities and by the arbitrariness of the principle of "whatever."

Disrupted

Theoretical analyses are also lived realities. Thus the disruption of art's singularity, of its hold on our attention and focus, is everywhere in the speech and action we produce in the seemingly unimportant registers we engage in relation to it.

G.B. and I have gone to see the Jackson Pollock exhibition at the Tate Gallery, London. I am wary of the hyperbolic claims made for the grand master of abstract expressionism, wary of the investment in the muscular and visceral hero of modernism, wary of the equation of action, physicality, and scale with some notion of liberation and of a strike for cultural autonomy. In short I am critically on guard and approach the whole visit with weariness and a sense of cultural obligation. I have dragged G.B. along in the hope that his superior knowledge of the period and of the work, the fact that he has already visited the exhibition on several occasions, will provide me with insight and animate the encounter, chip away at my weariness. Shortly after entering the exhibition and beginning to look, through the compulsions of chronology, at the early work, we spot the actress who plays the beautiful nurse Carol Hathaway on the fabled TV series *ER*. We are mesmerized, we follow her around the exhibition, she is even more beautiful in real life than on the screen and we speculate on the color of her hair and on her relationship to her companion at the exhibition. Our attention has been well and truly diverted and one mythic structure – the heroic modernist figure of Pollock and the art history that instates him and claims that singularity of our attention for him and for his art – has

This essay explores the notion that nature is – or might become – infrastructure, delivering critical services for human communities and economies. Put simply, this is the idea that forests, wetlands, reefs, and other landscapes, if appropriately organized, deliver services (water storage, purification, and conveyance; flood alleviation; improved air quality; climate regulation; and so on) that facilitate economic activity and development. It may seem peculiar to refer to landscapes or landforms as infrastructure, a term often reserved for roads, railways, and power lines. Infrastructure implies artifice; nature typically signifies its absence. However, as a growing literature in anthropology (Balee, 2006), geography (Denevan, 1992), and environmental history (Cronon, 1995) suggests, nearly every environment worldwide has been modified through human labor. Work, then, blurs the nature–technology boundary, suggesting that a neat division is illusory (Reuss and Cutcliffe, 2010; White, 1995). Moreover, the concept of infrastructure does not delimit a priori which – or even what kind of – components are needed to achieve a desired objective. In practice, disparate components are integrated and become a networked support system through what Geoffrey Bowker (1994: 10) calls 'infrastructural work', a set of organizational techniques (technical, governmental, and administrative) that create the conditions of possibility for a particular higher-order objective. In this essay, I develop an infrastructural approach for analyzing the practices, politics, and dynamics of environmental service delivery.

As infrastructure, nature is irreducible to a non-human world already 'out there'. It must, in its proponents' terms, be built, invested in, made functional, and managed. This is an active and inherently political process. As nature *becomes* infrastructure through work, human politics and values are inscribed on the landscape, much as they are embedded in arrangements of steel and concrete (Winner, 1980). Through this process, techno-politics and environmental politics become inextricably intertwined. As a landscape becomes infrastructure for one system of production, rather than another, a different group of environmental services (purposefully selected from a multiplicity of possibilities) becomes relevant. In a peculiar inversion, the landform may then be reverse engineered to meet the demands for the prioritized service(s).

The Panama Canal is an illuminating site to think about infrastructure, natural and otherwise. Five percent of global commerce moves through the canal's lock and dam system (US Agency for International Development, 2005: 1). Interoceanic transportation, the higher-order objective that defines the canal, is made possible by a water management system that delivers the enormous volume of liquid necessary for 35–45 ships to transit the locks every day. Fifty-two million gallons of fresh water, equal to the daily domestic consumption of approximately 500,000 Panamanians,[1] are released into the oceans during *each* of these transits. Thus, the maximum number of transits possible is limited by available water volume, among other constraints. The canal depends on fresh water that falls as rain across the surrounding watershed,[2] a 1077 square mile (Ibáñez et al., 2002) hydrologic basin drained by six major rivers (see Figure 1). That water is managed by a 'traditional' engineered infrastructure comprised of locks, dams, reservoirs, and hydrographic stations. These technologies – which correspond with the popular idea of infrastructure as hardware – were largely constructed and networked during the early 20th century. Since the late 1970s, however, canal administrators from the US and

Figure 1. The Panama Canal transit zone, including: the canal watershed (bounded with a bold line), Gatun Lake, Lake Alhajuela, and the canal terminus cities of Colon (Caribbean) Panama City (Pacific).

Panama have responded to actual and potential water scarcity by developing an integrated management approach that combines existing technologies with new techniques of land use planning, environmental regulation, and community-based management. I analyze this socio-political work of water provision – especially the management of forests and farmers in the canal watershed – in order to explore the stakes of making natural infrastructure.

The essay is organized in four sections. First, I develop a conceptual framework for studying nature as infrastructure. The material that follows is a case study drawing on 18 months of archival and ethnographic research in Panama and the US. Second, I examine the organization of a network of civil engineering and hydrographic technologies around the Chagres River. Collectively, these technologies transformed a potentially volatile river system into a generally manageable water source for the canal. Third, I examine the

Annotation 3, How might we change infrastructure?

At this, and similar junctures, we wonder how infrastructure moves from technology for building conditions to critical capacity configured between its objects, plans and users. What happens when we hypothetically write curricula into the Critical Media Lab, or draw a set of ethical propositions to deliver to a think tank on smart housing? What happens when we consider what happens when it stops being used, or inhabited, what image are we left with? And more crucially, how might we actually change these infrastructural plans and conditions? **At this point, if unbuilding is becoming a means to assert and articulate an alternative model for being with infrastructure, the question is how?** For this, *unbuilding* itself must be an annotation into and onto the field:

Halberstam, Jack, 'Unbuilding Gender Trans* Anarchitectures In and Beyond the Work of Gordon Matta-Clark', *Places*, 2018 <https://doi.org/10.22269/181003> pp. 3-6

Unbuilding infrastructure becomes annotation method and proposition: it holds as its *eidolon* — an idealied person or thing — the swerving off from trajectorial discourse, as differentiated splice, not divided, a harmony, new visibilities, but also inclusive of discord.

Gordon Matta-Clark, *Splitting*, 1974.
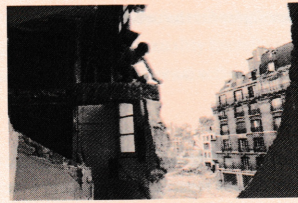
I. Building/Unbuilding

While the trans* body represents one particular challenge to ideas of physical coherence, all bodies pass through some version of the building and unbuilding that we tend to locate in the process of gender transition. Feminist art is filled with examples of such construction and deconstruction, often taking literal form as the projections of houses onto bodies and vice versa. To cite just one example: *Femme Maison (1946–47)*, an early series of paintings, drawings, sculptures, and assemblages by Louise Bourgeois (1911–2010), depicts female bodies lodged within houses; then inverts the relation between body and building and puts the house into the body; and then situates the female body as literally exceeding the limits imposed by the house or by domestic space in general. Here the artist who would later create a massive sculpture of a spider titled *Maman* (1999) envisions multiple fusions of femaleness into built structures. While some of Bourgeois' spider sculptures form wall-less rooms in their own right, at least one, *Spider (Cell)* (1997), additionally contains a small room within the legs, as if to cement the link between the home and the maternal body.

All these works map maternity onto the notion of housing, and then call into question the whole signifying system that makes such an association meaningful. The woman/house and spider/house constructions are creepy because they suggest that the female body has become so entangled with ideas of nature, and of domestic architecture as well, that we perhaps cannot imagine femininity otherwise. At the same time, if the *Femme Maison* works demand anything of the viewer, they seem to beg that we reach into the structures and pull the bodies out, alive or dead. Like conjoined twins, the bodies and buildings are so fused that any attempt to detach one from the other would, we sense, kill both. Perhaps this is the point. We must destroy both the woman in the building and the building in the woman. In so doing we can begin to reimagine the (re)constructed body as it intersects the coordinates of gender, the social constructions of identity, and the familiar contours of the built environment.

If the discipline of modernist architecture, as imagined by Ayn Rand and others, exemplified a monumental will to power in general, and a masculinist desire for imperial power in particular, then the counter-architectural project that came to be known as "anarchitecture" attempted to expose such projects and replace them with activist gestures. In the 1970s in New York City, the artists' group that called itself Anarchitecture sought to unmake the schemas within which such connections between power and architecture resonate as right and true. The Soho-based group eschewed notions of genius, and basked in anarchist principles of improvisation and collaboration. Nonetheless, as Frances Richard shows in her book *Gordon Matta-Clark: Physical Poetics*, anarchitecture as a counter-proposal to mainstream architecture was, and remains, "largely Matta-Clark's brainchild."[6]
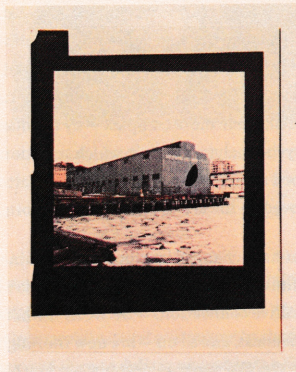
Indeed, it is to Matta-Clark that Angelopoulou turns in her essay as one example of queer forms of cutting. Angelopoulou first considers the surgical cut as theorized by Eva Hayward in a transgender context, where cutting and amputation register as "form[s] of becoming," ways to "feel the growth of new margins"; the article likewise examines Karen Barad's idea of the surgical incision as a "cutting together-apart," a means by which entangled forms are differentiated without being fully divided.[7] Angelopoulou then addresses Matta-Clark's cutting as an architectural act.[8] She sees his work as an exchange between the artist and the vital form of the building: "Matta Clark considered the buildings to be a form of living being and, as such ... active participant[s] in their transformational process. Artist and building were in an active dialogue during the preparation and the performance of the 'cuts.'"[9] The cuts that make up the gestural repertoire of Matta Clark's projects — I am thinking particularly of *Splitting* (1974), *Day's End*, and *Conical Intersect* (both 1975) — rehearse not only an undoing of

architectural theory and a refusal of certain political paradigms for the urban environment. They also, perhaps unwittingly, posit the unmaking of certain binary logics of the body.

His work is often described in terms of anatomical dissection, using the language of a surgical "operation." [10] Again, this is not at all to say that Matta-Clark's cuts into built structure mimic the cuts of sex reassignment surgery — only that these cuts, to the extent that they trouble the conventional gendering of the artist as male and the building as female, run parallel to later queer and trans* critiques. Granted, not all theorists have seen Matta-Clark's work as sympathetic (or even relevant) to queer and feminist principles of bodily order/disorder; for some, his art represents a masculine assault on the female body of the house. But of course, a reading that makes Matta-Clark into a type of rapist and the house into a vulnerable female body only confirms the naturalized relations between architect and maleness and building and femaleness that anarchitecture seeks to unravel. [11]

Neither a rescue operation nor a masculinist will to destroy, Matta-Clark's anarchic experiments with physical structures, and with the economies that assign such structures value, take on new meaning in our contemporary world, where real-estate markets have become pyramid schemes and bodily shapes are under constant revision. Matta-Clark's unusual practice of carving cavities and orifices into walls, floors, roofs, and ruins conjures a playful art of castration (i.e. the cut). His work presents a meditation on the bifurcation of the self into mind/body as well as male/female, and a critique of the formal project of architecture itself — all while offering multiple escape routes from the systems that mark and claim bodies and spaces.

Correspondingly, while progressive architectural theory has long since turned away from the imperial project of building worlds, gender theory has also subtly moved away from oppositions between essence and constructedness, and found new lexicons for embodiment. If feminist and queer and trans* debates in the 1980s and 1990s asked whether bodies were born a certain way or made into "men" and "women," in the last few decades the emphasis has shifted in both biopolitical and architectural directions. A case in point is the work of Paul B. Preciado, whose book *Pornotopia: An Essay on Playboy's Architecture and Biopolitics* considers the spatial dynamics of sex and power. [12] Preciado's imaginative reading of sex and gender through the topography of Hugh Hefner's pleasure palace the Playboy Mansion; he considers the distance traveled from Virginia Woolf's feminist call in the early decades of the century for "a room of one's own" to Hefner's call at the century's end for a bachelor pad of one's own. Preciado proposes that, just as women fled domestic space under the influence of second-wave feminism in the postwar years (think Betty Friedan's farewell to suburban life), men were moving back in, to create pornotopic spaces not only beyond but within domestic spheres. The implication is that patriarchy must not simply be challenged. It must be unbuilt.
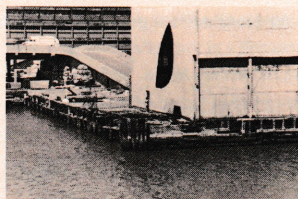
In making this point, Preciado echoes a maxim from Audre Lorde, who in 1979 famously cautioned that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house." [13] For both Lorde and Preciado, race, sex, gender and, by extension, class are represented in metaphors of built space. According to both theorists, change will only come through demolition. It follows that if patriarchal systems of domination are understood as architectural, then queer/trans*/feminist activist responses can be received as anarchitectural. Indeed, this anarchitectural impulse echoes through contemporary gender theory, as we can see in Judith Butler's writings. Butler began in 1990 by discussing ways in which binary gender systems are "troubled" — disrupted, made more complex — by the queer/trans* body. In later work, however, Butler's terminology regarding embodiment shifted from a psychoanalytic frame in which traditional Freudian understandings are upended, to a materialist frame in which corporeality and personhood are understood in regard to "matter" — both as living substance, and as social "mattering," or importance. From here, has Butler moved on toward the project of "undoing" gender.

Over the past few decades, then, conceptions of gender have changed irrevocably, from binary to multiple; from a centering of physical embodiment to the spatializing of identities; from definitive to fractal. And as new genders have been formed, old genders have also been destroyed. Gender ideologies that once facilitated intuitive connections — between the home and the maternal body, or the skyscraper or the gun and the male body, or the city or the ship and femaleness, and so on — are now thoroughly disarranged. The current tendency to describe queerness as a verb more than a noun is relevant here; you can queer something, but you cannot fashion an identity around queerness, which in current usage signals an anti-identitarian sense of personhood. This rhymes nicely with R. Buckminster Fuller's utopian pronouncement about being a verb: "I seem to be a verb, / an evolutionary process — / an integral function of the universe." [14]

Increasingly, we all seem to be verbs rather than nouns; evolving, shifting entities that are out of place, out of time, marooned. Current debates about bathrooms and transgender bodies are only the tip of a large and quickly melting iceberg. In this new landscape of gendered life, such debates register the mismatch between bodily forms and the built environment; disorientation is no longer the terrain solely of those who veer from the straight and narrow. More and more, it names a shared experience of life lived in the collapse of foundational fictions about identity — lived alongside a slow but perceptible declassification of knowledge, a movement away from the 19th-century project of ordering, typing, and cataloguing, and towards a 21st-century vision of multiplying, confusing, and unsorting. A queer and trans* anarchitecture offers an extensive vocabulary for expressing unbecoming.

Queer theorists have long used architectural language to examine how heterosexist hegemony prevails, and how it must be confronted. In an essay on "Queer Phenomenology," Sara Ahmed explains how heterosexuality literally grounds itself as normative: "Heterosexuality in a way becomes a field, a space that gives ground to, or even grounds, heterosexual action through the renunciation of what it is not, and also by the production of what it is."[15] She continues:

Heterosexuality is not then simply in objects, as if it could be a property of objects, and it is not simply about love objects or about delimiting who is available to love, although such objects do matter. Nor would heterosexual objects simply refer to objects that depict heterosexuality as a social and sexual good, although such objects also do matter. Rather, heterosexuality would be an effect of how objects gather to clear a ground, of how objects are arranged to create a background.[16]

Heterosexuality, Ahmed claims, governs both how objects are placed in space, and how objects are cleared from space. She discusses, as examples, not only the family home and the arrangement of bodies within it, but also the family as an absence of other kinds of bodies. This absence is as important as what is present. The heteronormative cultural field is shaped to encompass the home as if it lacks nothing. But anarchitectural performances insist on attention to what is not there, what has been removed, what is lacking — what has been destroyed, erased, or blacked out in order for what remains present to look permanent. Anarchitectural endeavors seek not to orient the subject properly to the object, nor to locate either in space and time. Rather anarchitecture chases disorientation, cultivates vertigo, and tilts the opposition between building and ruin on its axis, such that the body itself is no longer available to simple binary inscriptions. Instead, like the destroyed building, the body becomes a leaky vessel, a shattered surface, a mess of entrails, a discontinuous circuit for fluids and electricity, ideas and desires. As Christina Crosby proposes in her devastating memoir about becoming a quadriplegic, the body becomes "undone."[17]
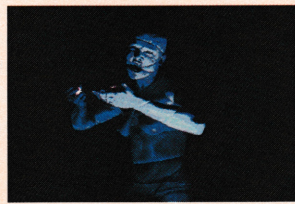
boychild, *BODYSELF*, 2012. [Courtesy the artist. Photo: Paul Ward.]

In fact, the Anarchitecture group's interventions into the physical experience of the city in the 1970s in some ways anticipated current conversations about disability. For Crosby, the sudden experience of becoming quadriplegic after a devastating bicycling accident remakes her whole world. While she had previously experienced the built environment as a backdrop to her unfolding life of teaching, queer sex, sports, and multiple other intimacies, after the accident she inhabits a world "created by building codes and education policy, subway elevators that don't work and school buses that don't arrive, and all the marginalization, exploitation, demeaning acts, and active exclusions that deny full access and equality to 'the disabled.'"[18] Nothing works. It is this view from below, from the wheelchair, from the site of catastrophe, that Matta-Clark's art engages.

Gordon Matta-Clark, *Fresh Air Cart*, 1972. [Courtesy The Estate of Gordon Matta-Clark and David Zwirner. © The Estate of Gordon Matta-Clark/Artists Rights Society (ARS) New York.]

Sometimes this engagement is explicit, as in the street performance *Fresh Air Cart* (1972), in which Matta-Clark and a team of helpers dispensed free "fresh air" from a contraption of oxygen tanks, a beach umbrella, and wheelchair-like seats. At other times, the interest in "disability" is implicit, as in Matta Clark's large-scale anarchitectural sculptures in abandoned urban sites. Revealing the city's tendency to enable passage for certain bodies through its streets, and then to deliver an understanding of public space based on such passage — think of Michel de Certeau's pedestrian and Walter Benjamin's flâneur, for example — Matta-Clark's anarchitectural projects implicitly emphasized the absence of some bodies (the disabled and the sick), the suppression or incarceration of others (the poor and those deemed criminal), and the segregation of neighborhoods by race and class. Anarchitecture is the an-archive of what has been omitted, what was never there to begin with, what has been abandoned on the way to speculative real-estate deals and the securing of white neighborhoods. Anarchitecture deals in the "object to be destroyed," as Pamela M. Lee puts it in her book on Matta-Clark's art. Anarchitecture frames abandonment while preserving the spaces that the market has rejected in relentless pursuit of gentrification.

The Anarchitecture group, which counted Laurie Anderson and Richard Landry among its members, deliberately defied the mandates of Le Corbusier and others who understood the house as a "machine to live in" and, in the case of Le Corbusier in particular, likened modern architecture to "the image of nature."[19] In this view, the architect must follow lines laid out by some primordial instinct, in accordance with the laws "of gravity, of statistic and of dynamics."[20] Not to do so would ensure failure; "[e]verything must hold together," Corbusier writes, "or it will collapse." But Matta-Clark had another sense of the dialectic between structure and failure, and he understood his cuts as balancing the building, in his words, "somewhere between the supports and collapse." Matta Clark proposes in one of his note cards:

"Corbusier is a classist whose faith in the past is restated in a machine aesthetic. Perhaps the faith we place in our past needs re-

examination."[21]

Gordon Matta-Clark, *Conical Intersect*, 1975.
[Courtesy The Estate of Gordon Matta-Clark
and David Zwirner. © The Estate of Gordon
Matta-Clark/Artists Rights Society (ARS),
New York.]

Past and future, and even time itself, are under construction in the anarchitectural spaces carved into the city and its communities, into history and futurity, by the utopian visions of activist groups — in Soho in the '70s, and in other times and places as well — who have combined a sense of purpose with an understanding of space. Modernist architecture believed that form followed function, and sought to impose a rational order upon an irrational existence. In contrast, the Anarchitecture group — much like Occupy decades later — outlined no goal, no trajectory, no mission. As Matta-Clark writes (again in response to Le Courbusier), "anarchitecture attempts to solve no problem." Or, as another note card announces, "nothing works." Of course, "nothing works" could easily be a comment on a deindustrialized New York City. But in an anarchitectural context, we might instead read this motto as a comment on the power of absence, silence, and invisibility to redefine and reshape dense urban landscapes. "Nothing works too..." the phrase proposes; or, "nothing is working"; or, "the work is nothing."
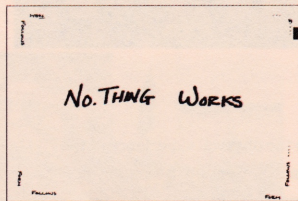
Gordon Matta-Clark, index card note, ca. 1973–
1974. [Courtesy The Estate of Gordon
Matta-Clark and David Zwirner. © The Estate
of Gordon Matta-Clark/Artists Rights Society
(ARS), New York.]

In these political refusals of trajectory and teleology, we feel the potency of joining *anarchy* to *architecture*. Architecture derives from the Greek word *arkhitekton,* combining *arkhi* (chief) with *tekton* (builder). *Archon*, another root, means ruler or magistrate. Anarchitecture — almost by definition — cannot be embodied by an architect. It resists mastery, refuses to build, and finds other ways to alter the environments we move through, where we live and die. This project of unmaking is obviously anti-utilitarian, and while it is industrial, it moves against the processes of production, to envision the building less as a machine and more as an event, an eruption, a process. Calling to mind Walter Benjamin's famous formulation in which the filmmaker acts as a surgeon rather than a magician, Matta-Clark turns away from the magic of architectural productions of space, and decides to cut and suture the cityscape, making giant holes in buildings and removing walls to create matrices of light and air. His work thus holds within it what Lucas Crawford has called a "transgender architectonics." For Crawford, architecture — as a practice rooted in solidity — and transgender bodies — those bodies committed to what he calls "an ethos of change" — seem to be irrevocably at odds. But transformation is anarchitecture's very rationale.[22]

2. Splitting

Anarchitecture is perhaps more attuned than any other performative or sculptural practice to the transformative opportunity represented by transgender orientations to space. Without implying any particular intentionality on the part of the artists and activists involved in the historical project of the '70s, we might think about anarchitectural performances structurally, in relation to new aesthetic regimes ushered in by changes in the meaning of work, community, space, sex, and body.

Gordon Matta-Clark, *Splitting*, 1974.
[Courtesy The Estate of Gordon Matta-Clark
and David Zwirner. © The Estate of Gordon
Matta-Clark/Artist's Rights Society (ARS),

Annotation 4, Where to start unbuilding infrastructure?

With *unbuilding* configured, we can say that to start work on *unbuilding* infrastructure is not just to imagine a phase shift in what can be defined as infrastructure, or what infrastructure defines and determines. Rather it is to locate the particular points at which to unbuild.

In Matta-Clark's house, unbuilding was a cut into the conditions of shelter and thus into the plan of domesticity; for Halberstam's unbuilding of gender, it was to cut into the conditioning binaries of gender, and thus the plan for 'fixing' broken bodies towards one body or the other.

Turning to our texts, for Judith Butler, Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, and Andrea Phillips, these targets could be said to be: the conditions of vulnerability to infrastructure, and the plan for distributing dependency; the infrastructural condition of neoliberal institutional policy, and the plan to kill planning in the undercommons; and the condition in which education and exhibition institutions must collaborate, combine and standardise their activities, forming new solidarities to survive, and the plan to reduce funding to both. Against these targets they respectively mobilise: assemblies defined by claims on and mobilises against the lack of infrastructure concerning a livable life; the intensity of planning in the undercommons, i.e., where the real work is done; a proposition for new forms of solidarities between institutions based on the recognition of their distinct and situated capacities.

Butler, Judith, 'Bodily Vulnerability, Coalitional Politics', in *Notes Toward A Performative Theory of Assembly* (London: Harvard University Press, 2015) <https://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674967755> p. 127 (see also: p. 21)

Moten, Fred, and Stefano Harney, 'The Only Possible Relationship to the University Today Is a Criminal One', in *The Undercommons Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (Wivenhoe: Minor Compositions, 2013) <http://www.minorcompositions.info/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/undercommons-web.pdf> pp. 26-7

Phillips, Andrea, 'Educational Investment: A Context for CAMPUS', *The Contemporary Journal*, 2019 <https://thecontemporaryjournal.org> pp. 3-4

infrastructural goods without being able to assume them to one degree or another, so when infrastructural conditions for politics are themselves decimated, so too are the assemblies that depend upon them. At such a point, the condition of the political is one of the goods for which political assembly takes place—this might be the double meaning of the infrastructural under conditions in which public goods are increasingly dismantled by privatization.[2]

In effect, the demand for infrastructure is a demand for a certain kind of inhabitable ground, and its meaning and force derive precisely from that lack. This is why the demand is not for all kinds of infrastructure, since some serve the decimation of livable life (military forms of detention, imprisonment, occupation, and surveillance, for instance), and some support livable life. In some cases, the street cannot be taken for granted as the space of appearance, the Arendtian space of politics, since there is, as we know, a struggle to establish that very ground, or to take that ground back from police control.[3] The possibility of doing that, however, depends upon the performative efficacy of creating a political space from existing infrastructural conditions. Arendt is at least partially right when she claims that the space of appearance comes into being at the moment of political action. A romantic thought to be sure, since it is not always so easy to do in practice. She presumes that the material conditions for gathering are separate from any particular space of appearance, but the task is actually to let the infrastructure become part of the new action, even a collaborative actor. But if politics is oriented toward the making and preserving of the conditions that allow for livability, then it seems that the space of appearance is not ever fully separable from questions of infrastructure and architecture, and that they not only condition the action, but take part in the making of the space of politics.

events or processes outside of our control.[12] We are all unknowing and exposed to what may happen, and our not knowing is a sign that we do not, cannot, control all the conditions that constitute our lives. However invariable such a general truth may be, it is lived differentially, since exposure to injury at work, or faltering social services, clearly affects workers and the unemployed much more than others.

On the one hand, everyone is dependent on social relations and enduring infrastructure in order to maintain a livable life, so there is no getting rid of that dependency. On the other hand, that dependency, though not the same as a condition of subjugation, can easily become one. The dependency of human creatures on sustaining and supporting infrastructural life shows that the organization of infrastructure is intimately tied with an enduring sense of individual life: how life is endured, and with what degree of suffering, livability, or hope.

In other words, no one person suffers a lack of shelter without there being a social failure to organize shelter in such a way that it is accessible to each and every person. And no one person suffers unemployment without there being a system or a political economy that fails to safeguard against that possibility. This means that in some of our most vulnerable experiences of social and economic deprivation, what is revealed is not only our precariousness as individual persons—though that may well be revealed—but also the failures and inequalities of socioeconomic and political institutions. In our individual vulnerability to a precarity that is socially induced, each "I" potentially sees how its unique sense of anxiety and failure has been implicated all along in a broader social world. This initiates the possibility of taking apart that individualizing and maddening form of responsibility in favor of an ethos of

solidarity that would affirm mutual dependency, dependency on workable infrastructures and social networks, and open the way to a form of improvisation in the course of devising collective and institutional ways of addressing induced precarity.

THE ONLY POSSIBLE RELATIONSHIP TO THE UNIVERSITY TODAY IS A CRIMINAL ONE

"To the university I'll steal, and there I'll steal," to borrow from Pistol at the end of Henry V, as he would surely borrow from us. This is the only possible relationship to the American university today. This may be true of universities everywhere. It may have to be true of the university in general. But certainly, this much is true in the United States: it cannot be denied that the university is a place of refuge, and it cannot be accepted that the university is a place of enlightenment. In the face of these conditions one can only sneak into the university and steal what one can. To abuse its hospitality, to spite its mission, to join its refugee colony, its gypsy encampment, to be in but not of – this is the path of the subversive intellectual in the modern university.

Worry about the university. This is the injunction today in the United States, one with a long history. Call for its restoration like Harold Bloom or Stanley Fish or Gerald Graff. Call for its reform like Derek Bok or Bill Readings or Cary Nelson. Call out to it as it calls to you. But for the subversive intellectual, all of this goes on upstairs, in polite company, among the rational men. After all, the subversive intellectual came under false pretenses, with bad documents, out of love. Her labor is as necessary as it is unwelcome. The university needs what she bears but cannot bear what she brings. And on top of all that, she disappears. She disappears into the underground, the downlow lowdown maroon community of the university, into the *undercommons of enlightenment*, where the work gets done, where the work gets subverted, where the revolution is still black, still strong.

What is that work and what is its social capacity for both reproducing the university and producing fugitivity? If one were to say teaching, one would be performing the work of the university. Teaching is merely a profession and an operation of that onto-/auto-encyclopedic circle of the state" that Jacques Derrida calls the Universitas. But it is useful to invoke this operation to glimpse the hole in the fence where labor enters, to glimpse its hiring hall, its night quarters. The university needs teaching labor, despite itself, or as itself, self-identical with

and thereby erased by it. It is not teaching that holds this social capacity, but something that produces the not visible other side of teaching, a thinking through the skin of teaching toward a collective orientation to the knowledge object as future project, and a commitment to what we want to call the prophetic organization. But it is teaching that brings us in. Before there are grants, research, conferences, books, and journals there is the experience of being taught and of teaching. Before the research post with no teaching, before the graduate students to mark the exams, before the string of sabbaticals, before the permanent reduction in teaching load, the appointment to run the Center, the consignment of pedagogy to a discipline called education, before the course designed to be a new book, teaching happened.

The moment of teaching for food is therefore often mistakenly taken to be a stage, as if eventually one should not teach for food. If the stage persists, there is a social pathology in the university. But if the teaching is successfully passed on, the stage is surpassed, and teaching is consigned to those who are known to remain in the stage, the sociopathological labor of the university. Kant interestingly calls such a stage "self-incurred minority." He tries to contrast it with having the "determination and courage to use one's intelligence without being guided by another." "Have the courage to use your own intelligence." But what would it mean if teaching or rather what we might call "the beyond of teaching" is precisely what one is asked to get beyond, to stop taking sustenance? And what of those minorities who refuse, the tribe of moles who will not come back from beyond (that which is beyond "the beyond of teaching"), as if they will not be subjects, as if they want to think as objects, as minority? Certainly, the perfect subjects of communication, those successfully beyond teaching, will see them as waste. But their collective labor will always call into question who truly is taking the orders of the enlightenment. The waste lives for those moments beyond teaching when you give away the unexpected beautiful phrase – unexpected, no one has asked, beautiful, it will never come back. Is being the biopower of the enlightenment truly better than this?

Perhaps the biopower of the enlightenment knows this, or perhaps it is just reacting to the objecthood of this labor as it must. But even as

criticism as utopian fallacy by teachers whose daily job is to maintain a sense of purpose in schools and colleges with diminishing resources and rapidly swelling numbers of challenged and challenging pupils.

In the UK, mainstream education at primary, secondary and higher level is in financial and political crisis. In particular, the arts and other forms of cultural education are being divested in favour of the 'hard' subjects of science, technology, engineering, and maths. The right to free, comprehensive education – a key aspiration of the post-war Welfare Sate endowment in the UK – is a diminishing mainstream political demand. Given such a context, we asked what can and should education provision by museums and art galleries do and be? Some of the pithiest and most attuned responses came from newly-qualified art teachers from the northeast region, who rallied powerfully against the prevalent 'those who can, do; those who can't, teach' myth so omniscient in the arts sector. Our aim was to identify models and practices of pedagogy that create and sustain solidarity between educational and arts institutions, as both struggle under the political attacks wrought upon them by social division, divestment, and privatisation.

The CAMPUS and BxNU models are, of course, different – we do not and could not claim alterity for BxNU. And under our umbrella sit programmes and processes that, at the moment, demonstrate a fairly conventional understanding (on the part of both partners) of what contemporary art is, research is, education is for, and what such partnerships should bring about. In the context of the increased dissolution of egalitarian access to education at primary and secondary levels, with its egregious domino effect on the likelihood of poor, working class, and BAME kids getting to university, now is the time for us to question our politics and those of the institutional

structures that they support. This is aggravated by the widespread adherence from both the Left and Right sides of the British political divide to the upholding of meritocracy as a foundational myth of affective and economic progress. As Diane Reay writes, '[i]n 21st century England, social, political and economic inequalities have been transformed into educational inequalities that then become the responsibility of the individual.'[8]

So, the hard questions we must all face: what does our interest, investigation, and action in the field of alternative pedagogic provision, whether with or independent from galleries, do for the education system from which it seeks to disambiguate – alternate – itself? What is the best policy: to support education as it is currently being provided by the state? Or to set ourselves apart on the basis that we can be nimbler, more experimental, and more knowledgeable in our alterity? I paint a sharply divisive picture of course, but the politics of such questions are not easy to dismiss and the financial implications need unpacking.

The UK is descending into the impassioned production of further inequality through the assertion of forms of popular sovereignty in which 'the people' is rendered into what Ernesto Laclau – following Jacques Lacan – calls 'partial objects'.[9] As cultural workers we need to pay attention to the ways in which our individual acts and institutions connect to a web of refraction of state education that enables such objectification and thus partialisation, which erodes the solidarity that is necessitated to secure a just educational offer. In the UK, current psychopathologisations that have emerged from BREXIT debates – queers, Muslims, women – are also forms of rendering us partial objects. Laclau continues:

> [We must] conceive of the 'people' as a *political* category, not as a *datum* of the social structure. The designates are not

a *given* group, but an act of institution that create a new agency out of a plurality of heterogeneous elements. For this reason, I have insisted from the very beginning that my minimal unit of analysis would not be the *group*, as a referent, but the socio-political *demand*.[10]

The issue at stake, is that the critiques of collective and non-selective education, which have been a constant in the UK since the emergence of the welfare settlement, have settled around the assertion of a non-collective, meritocratic alternative that is supported, usually unconsciously, by those that set up education projects in the cultural sector (i.e., outside of state education provision). State comprehensive education provision may well have, and have had, many faults across its development, but its core infrastructural assertion is that anyone can be taught and all should have the right of access to education.

We need to collaborate within an education system to produce embodied subjects who are taught their collective rights and not that collective rights are a historical mistranslation of subjecthood. We need to think about how we can embed infrastructural change and understanding into our collaborative actions. There are many examples of artists and curators who understand and are trying to do this, but individual acts are easily incorporated into the values of privatisation that destroy solidarity.

A complex recent example of the type of battle being fought within state education is the recent debate about education that has emerged from parents' and community protests against a primary school in Birmingham that taught a programme called 'No Outsiders' to final year pupils (aged 11). As part of an effort to teach children about the groups and individuals protected by the Equality Act, the programme

introduced children to different forms of family arrangements and relationships, including same-sex parenting.[11] The school has had to withdraw the programme due to widespread protest from Muslim parents who claim that the teaching goes against Islam. This is a critical conjunction that illustrates the difference between what Laclau calls a 'group' and a 'political demand'. At BALTIC, most of the communications aimed at local communities are now translated into Arabic to make sure that children and their carers feel welcome and know what's going on, for example, during the holidays. (Gateshead has a large Syrian community.) However, critics of integration policies might deem this an inadequate move. How can BALTIC move from initiatives that are aimed at getting people through the threshold of the gallery to infrastructures that support the teaching of queer literature in primary schools? And how might funding structures be used to support this?

Last year, at the Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow, the artist Jason E. Bowman curated an exhibition called Queer Tim⬚s School in which he ran a series of assemblies for LGBTPQI+A citizens in Glasgow and the region to discuss histories of queer collaboration, organisation, and education in these overlapping communities.[12] The constituency that formed around these assemblies then organised, with Bowman, the commission and acquisition by GoMA of ten artists' prints, which would thereafter be available for any school to use as a teaching aide in perpetuity. These events marked the 30th anniversary of the introduction of Section 28 in England.[13] Each print had a lesson plan attached, written by one of Bowman's collaborators, a queer primary school teacher. By stipulating in his 'Letter of Agreement' that, in acquiring the work, GoMA must commit to providing resources for any school to use the material produced, the artist convinced the institution to confront its own exhibition, education, and distribution policies

Annotation 5, How might we unbuild: gestures towards a critical use of infrastructure.

Where we have established what, where, and why to *unbuild*, *unbuilding* might next be used to annotate *how*.

Returning to the events and cuts of the anarchitecture of Matta-Clark, unbuilding for Halberstam comprises, 'cutting and stitching,' 'dismantling and re-making,' sculpting flesh (form) and molecular form (matter). It uses 'technologies of fabrication,' 'tools of surgery and hormones,' but also the idea of transgender as a 'wrecking ball.' Like anarchitecture, an 'anti-political project,' of 'site specific cuts into abandoned buildings… reactively destructive and full of queer promise,' unbuilding expresses, unbecoming and the disarrangement of boundaries and decisions. Not simply fixing infrastructure, how do cuts in an infrastructural sense, disarrange the worlds of forms, figures, metaphors and conditions of infrastructure, as they are anticipated and used? Here, we search the following examples of infrastructural intervention — whose objects might also be institutions — for parallels:

Céline Condorelli's *Support Structures* as exhibition making.

Public Practice as broker between user and planning and local authority departments.

Theatrum Mundi concerning research into and crafting of cities.

Strelka Institute for big-media and design research after planetary-scale computation.

Forensic Architecture concerning the application of mixed methodologies from human rights, law and art.

École de Recherche Graphique as good practice of edu-organisational hybridity.

Céline Condorelli

Support Structures
(red 2009 -green reprint 2014)

A co-production with Support Structure: Céline Condorelli and Gavin Wade
with James Langdon

ISBN 978-1-933128-45-0
Published by Sternberg Press
215 x 280 mm, 438 pp., two-color printing, 16 full-color, softcover
€35 £30

"Support Structures is a manual for what bears, sustains, props, and holds up. It is a manual for those things that encourage, give comfort, approval, and solace; that care for and provide consolation and the necessities of life. It is a manual for that which assists corroborates, advocates, articulates, substantiates, champions, and endorses; for what stands behind, underpins, frames, presents, maintains, and strengthens. Support Structures is a manual for those things that give, in short, support. While the work of supporting might traditionally appear as subsequent, unessential, and lacking value in itself, this manual is an attempt to restore attention to one of the neglected, yet crucial modes through which we apprehend and shape the world."

Essays by: Céline Condorelli, Mark Cousins, Jaime Stapleton, Andrea Phillips, Bart de Baere, Wouter Davidts, Eyal Weizman & Rony Brauman, Jean-Claude Lebensztejn, Jan Verwoert.

With works by: Michael Asher, Artist Placement Group, Can Altay, Conrad Atkinson, Adam Broomberg & Oliver Chanarin, Lonnie van Brummelen & Siebren de Haan, Filippo Brunelleschi, Banu Cennetoglu, Christopher D'Arcangelo, Martin Beck, Cevdet Erek, Flatpack 001 (Mark and Stephen Beasley), Andrea Fraser, Buckminster Fuller, Ryan Gander, Ella Gibbs, Gareth Jones, Frederick Kiesler, Lucy Kimbell, James Langdon, El Lissitzky, Gordon Matta-Clark, Enzo

ABOUT

Public Practice is a not-for-profit social enterprise with a mission to improve the quality and equality of everyday places by building the public sector's capacity for proactive planning. Read more about the organisation, and who we are.

ABOUT US

Public Practice is a not-for-profit company founded in September 2017 by the Greater London Authority and seed funded by six founding Partners from across the public, third and private sectors.

WHAT WE DO

Our purpose is not just to increase and diversify the built environment expertise working in local government, it's to transform the status of public service, and support those working within it to lead the way. To do this we have created a unique professional placement programme specifically designed for built environment practitioners and their public authority hosts. We offer professionals currently in the private sector an attractive route into working for the public sector whilst also celebrating and capturing leading industry knowledge and sharing it across the wider sector.

WHY WE DO IT

We believe good public planning is fundamental for creating a built environment that is spatially,

socially and economically inclusive and sustainable. Being a public planner - by which we mean any built environment expert working in the public sector - can be an extraordinarily rewarding and worthwhile job. No role is more influential in shaping the world around us for the public good. But there is not enough recognition of the value of public planning or its potential to do more to tackle the grand challenges facing society.

HOW WE DO IT
We are a not-for-profit organisation. Local Authorities pay the salaries of Associates and pay Public Practice a placement fee of £5,000 - £7,000 per placement. In addition, we receive donations from Partners which help cover the core costs of running the organisation. This allows us to keep our fees charged to the public sector affordable and means we don't have to ask Associates to pay to take part, helping to ensure we can attract the most diverse candidates we can. In 2019/20 we anticipate that 55% of our income will be from placement fees, and 45% from Partners.

PEOPLE
Public Practice currently has five Company Directors and two Board Observers. The Board delegate the day-to-day running of the organisation to a team of staff. In addition, as recognition of the work by two GLA employees integral to the set-up of Public Practice, they have been given the honorary title 'co-founder'.

Board, Team

THEATRUM MUNDI helps to expand the crafts of city-making. We lead projects that stimulate productive collaboration between urbanists and artists, and share the ideas they create through open access publishing and events.

INSTITUTE FOR A SOCIAL CITY

CHANGING THE CITY

Strelka was founded in 2009 to change the cultural and physical landscapes of Russian cities. The Institute promotes positive changes and creates new ideas and values through its educational activities. Strelka provides brand new learning opportunities, while the City remains at the centre of the Institute's research programme.

DEVELOPING HUMAN CAPITAL

Strelka Institute is a non-governmental institution with an experimental approach to education. Its 5-month study programme is aimed at young international specialists with backgrounds in architecture, design, the social sciences, and other fields. Strelka's multidisciplinary education programme was shaped specifically to develop human capital and boost students' creative energy.

CREATING THE FUTURE

Strelka's educational programme promotes critical thinking and public presentation skills. Other cornerstones of the study programme are visual skills development, creative research and data analysis and — last but not least — the potential applicability of research projects and their value in solving the real problems of Russian cities.

NEW STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC SPACE

Strelka is open to the world and has always been ready for cooperation and networking; all the knowledge produced at the Institute and many of its educational events are free to the public. This openness has turned the Strelka Institute into a popular public space around which various communities are built. Every summer, the Strelka courtyard hosts a number of public events: including lectures, conferences, and film screenings. Because of the Institute's great location — in the centre of Bolotny Island, right opposite the Kremlin, Krymskaya Embankment, 'Museon' Park and Gorky Park — Muscovites come here daily to work, socialise or just to have lunch. This territory used to belong to the Moscow chocolate factory 'Red October' and was turned into a creative cluster several years ago. As a lively and open public space, Strelka has had a huge impact on the development of the whole island.
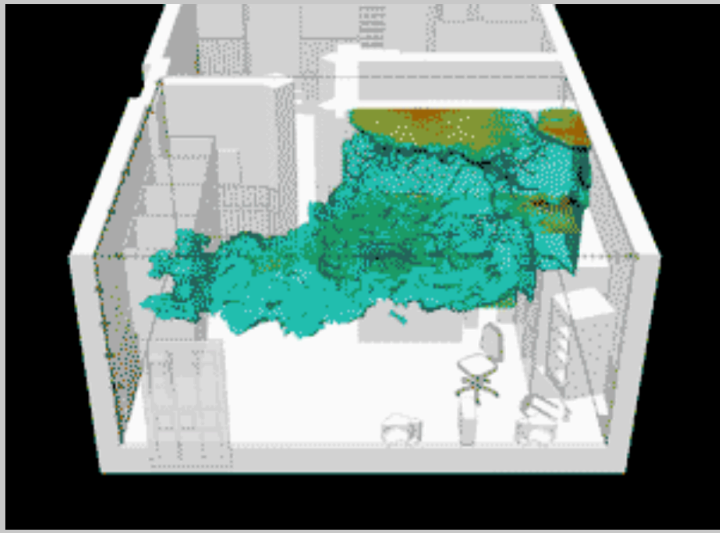
Counter Investigations: Forensic Architecture

Exhibitions

7 March – 13 May 2018

Counter Investigations is the first UK survey exhibition of the work of Forensic Architecture, an independent research agency.

Recent Investigations
Key Concepts
Short Course in Forensic Architecture

Forensic Architecture is both the name of the agency established in 2010, and a form of investigative practice into state violence and human rights violations that traverses architectural, journalistic and legal fields, and shifts

Forensic Architecture exhibition team: Eyal Weizman (Director), Christina Varvia (Researcher in Charge), Ariel Caine, Franc Camps Ferber, Stefan Laxness, Stefanos Levidis, Nicholas Masterton, Samaneh Moafi, Sarah Nankivell, Elena Paca, Robert Preuss, Grace Quah, Theo Resnikoff, Simone Rowat, Nathan Su, Bob Trafford, William Winfield, Charles Heller and Lorenzo Pezzani (Forensic Oceanography)

Graphics: Wayne Daly & Claire Lyon, Matthew Chrislip

Short Course in Forensic Architecture is organized in partnership with MA in Forensic Architecture, Centre for Research Architecture, Goldsmiths, University of London led by Susan Schuppli and Lorenzo Pezzani

Exhibition Supporters: The Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts and The Forensic Architecture Exhibition Supporters Circle: Shane Akeroyd, Charles Asprey, Sir Richard Rogers

Forensic Architecture Supporters: European Research Council (ERC); Sigrid Rausing Trust; Potter Foundation; OAK foundation; Goldsmiths, University of London

erg
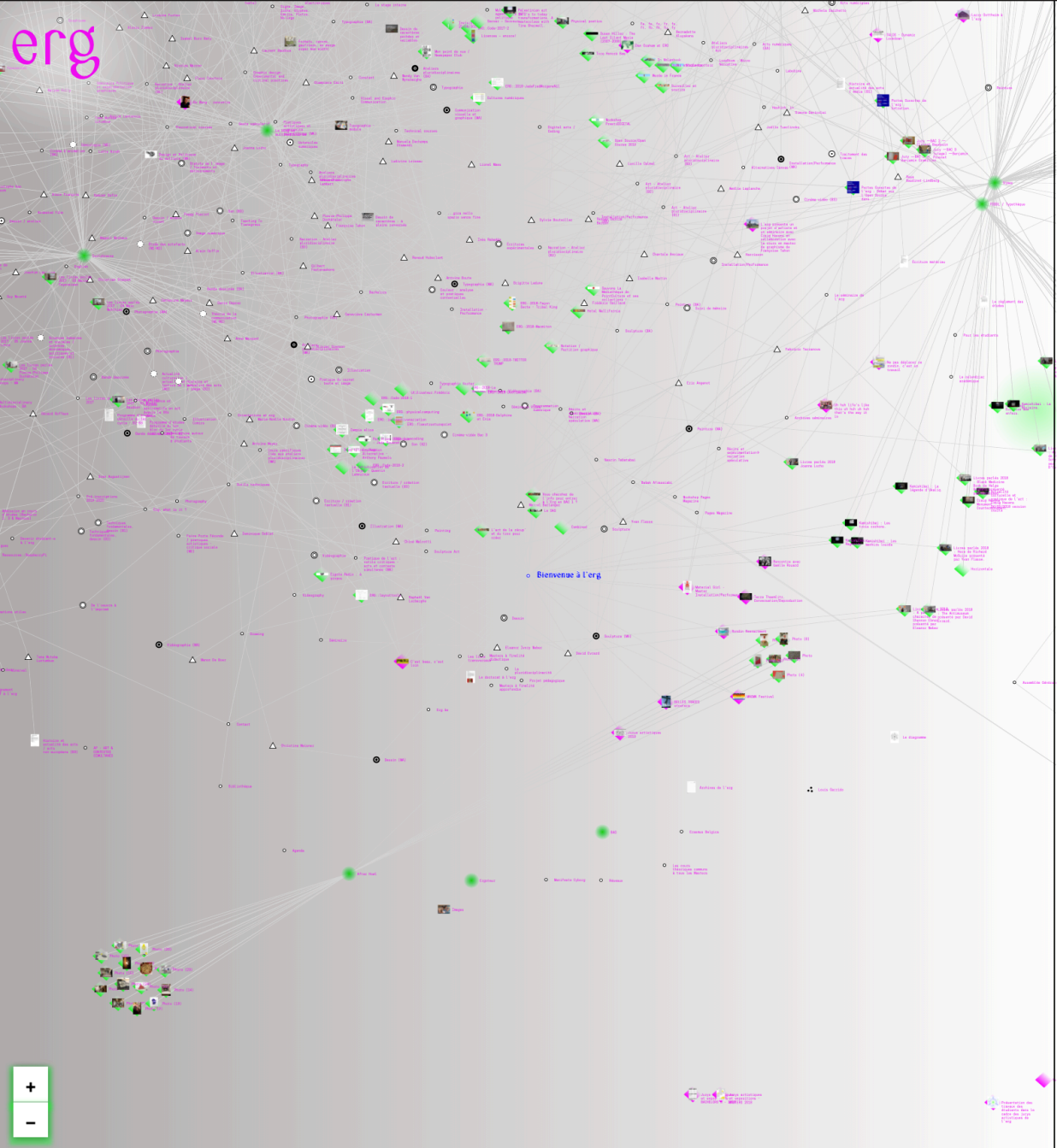
Bienvenue à l'erg

—Site en cours de perpétuel développement —

L'erg est le lieu des pratiques artistiques, plastiques, graphiques qui entrent dans les zones à risque théoriques et formelles. Un lieu et des pédagogies à définir et redéfinir collectivement. C'est un lieu où l'on peut apprendre de ce qui ne marche pas. Un lieu de recherche donc.

L'erg, école de recherche graphique, est une École Supérieure des Arts (ESA), enseignement libre de plein exercice et de type long, subventionnée par la Communauté française de Belgique. L'erg est un des 5 instituts de Saint-Luc Bruxelles.

L'erg, du grec εργον [ergon] (travail, occupation, ouvrage), est une unité de mesure de l'énergie.

→ Plus d'info sur ce site web

Projet pédagogique

Pré-inscriptions 2019-2020

Contact

Articulation des cours

→ La pluridisciplinarité
    → Orientations
    → Bachelors
        → B1
        → B2
        → B3
        → Masters

Search videos, people, and more

Upload

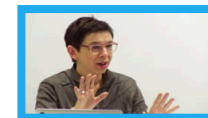59:39

Rethinking the Art School, Laurence Rassel

1 year ago | More

CreatingCommons PLUS   + Follow

More from CreatingCommons

Autoplay next video

Rethinking the Ar...
CreatingCommons

Annotation 6, The question of opacity and living with unbuilt infrastructures, and, how can we find ways of *being with* the disarrangements of infrastructure?

Unbuilding, finally is a call to live with the disarrangement of infrastructure.

If infrastructure vehemently mobilises proper forms, figures, and metaphors in order that we continue to believe in its necessity and fragility for the maintenance of life; how can we look to already unbuilt infrastructures for lives lived with disarrangement. How might this model a move towards liveable life? This requires a different set of questions about how we live together, or not, with how infrastructures distribute, relate and fracture and make things and people functional. Here we look to the undercommons and the non-rational infrastructures and communities of cultural practices on the thresholds of institution

Moten, Fred, Stefano Harney, and Stevphen Shukaitis, 'The General Antagonism: An Interview with Stevphen Shukaitis', in *The Undercommons Fugitive Planning & Black Study*, Wivenhoe (Minor Compositions, 2013) <http://www.minorcompositions.info/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/undercommons-web.pdf> p. 110

Salvini, Francesco, 'Instituting on the Threshold', *Transversal Texts*, Monster Municipalisms, 2016 <https://eipcp.net/transversal/0916/salvini/en.html>

Institutional transformation through freedom, durability and methods of sustainability. After For Salvini, after Frantz Fanon, the revolution is, for obvious reasons not possible, so we are forced to manage an institution which we deny. Destitute/institute; destroy/invent; preserving a series of capabilities of the institutions (you need an infrastructure to do that).

experiment is going on within the general antagonism the under-commons is found. Being possessed by the dispossessed, and offering up possession through dispossession, is such an experiment and is, among other things, a way to think of love, and this too can arise in study. I think this is the kind of experiment we are attempting with the School for Study.

STEVPHEN: Preparing for the interview I resorted to a typically web 2.0 approach of asking on Facebook what questions I should ask. I sent some of these to you. One question that seemed quite interesting was whether it was possible to be part of the undercommons and not study, or whether the undercommons includes, or could include, non-instructional university service workers and forms of affective labor which are not immediately pedagogical

FRED: A lot of the questions from people on Facebook were, 'how do you enter into the undercommons?': well, you know, the 'undercom-mons' is a box, and if you open it you can enter into our world. A couple of people seem to be reticent about the term 'study,' but is there a way to be in the undercommons that isn't intellectual? Is there a way of being intellectual that isn't social? When I think about the way we use the term 'study,' I think we are committed to the idea that study is what you do with other people. It's talking and walking around with other people, working, dancing, suffering, some irreducible conver-gence of all three, held under the name of speculative practice. The notion of a rehearsal – being in a kind of workshop, playing in a band, in a jam session, or old men sitting on a porch, or people working together in a factory – there are these various modes of activity. The point of calling it 'study' is to mark that the incessant and irrevers-ible intellectuality of these activities is already present. These activi-ties aren't ennobled by the fact that we now say, "oh, if you did these things in a certain way, you could be said to be have been studying." To do these things is to be involved in a kind of common intellectual practice. What's important is to recognize that that has been the case – because that recognition allows you to access a whole, varied, alter-native history of thought.

What I also want to say about that question is that it strikes me as being overly concerned with the rightness and legitimacy of the term. It's not so much that I want to say, 'oh, he or she didn't understand what we meant by study.' It's more like, 'okay, well, if that terms both-ers you, you can use another term.' You can say, 'my understanding of study doesn't work for what it is that I think I want to get from what you guys are saying.' So, that person then has to have some kind of complicated paleonymic relation to that term. They have to situate themselves in some kind of appositional relation to that term; they have to take some of it, take something from it, and make their own way away from it. Insofar as you are now in what might be called a dissident relation, you are precisely involved in what it is that I think of as study.

So if the question is, 'does it have to include 'study?'', my first response is: okay, you don't understand what we mean by study. And then my second response is: but it's okay that you don't understand what we mean by study, because you're going to do something else now. So, my first response was to be correct and say, 'by study we mean this. The thing that I think that you want from what we're saying is precisely what it is that we mean by study.' And I'm gonna say, 'you seem to have a problem with study. How can you have a problem with study? If you truly understood what study is, you would know that it is this sort of sociality. That's all that it is.' But, then I would say, I'm being an asshole. That's sort of taking this guy to task for not having a properly reverent, adequate understanding of the term – and what I'm saying is that it's precisely his misunderstanding of, his active refusal to un-derstand, the term that is an extension of study. Just keep pushing it. I will always think of his or her tendency to want to avoid or to disa-vow study as an act of study. But, if he or she doesn't think about it that way, that's okay.

STEFANO: At the same time, I'm happy for us to say more about *study*. I don't think it's a question of being completely passive about it and saying, 'do what you want.' There are reasons why we felt that we had to pursue these terms, and one of the key reasons – which Fred has already talked about – is our feeling that it was important to stress

that study is already going on, including when you walk into a class-room and before you think you start a class, by the way. This is equally the case with planning. Think of the way we use *'policy,'* as something like thinking for others, both because you think others can't think and also because you somehow think that you can think, which is the other part of thinking that there's something wrong with someone else – thinking that you've fixed yourself somehow, and therefore that gives you the right to say someone else needs fixing. *Planning* is the opposite of that, it's to say, "look, it's not that people aren't thinking for themselves, acting for themselves together in concert in these different ways. It just appears that way for you because you've corrected yourself in this particular way in which they will always look wrong for you and where therefore you try to deploy policy against them." The very deployment of policy is the biggest symptom that there's something you're not getting in thinking that you need to do that – and it seems to me, really, the same with study. I think it's also fine for people not to use it or to find something else. But, equally, I think that the point about study is that intellectual life is already at work around us. When I think of study, I'm as likely to think about nurses in the smoking room as I am about the university. I mean it really doesn't have anything to do with the university to me, other than that, as Laura Harris says, the university is this incredible gathering of resources. So, when you're thinking, it's nice to have books.

FRED: Of course the smoking room is an incredible gathering of resources too.

STEFANO: Yes. So, I just don't think of study and the university with that kind of connection – even though originally we were writing about what we knew, and that's why the undercommons first came out in relationship to the university. I don't see the undercommons as having any necessary relationship to the university. And, given the fact that, to me, the undercommons is a kind of comportment or ongoing experiment with and as the *general antagonism*, a kind of way of being with others, it's almost impossible that it could be matched up with particular forms of institutional life. It would obviously be cut though in different kinds of ways and in different spaces and times.

FRED: Studying is not limited to the university. It's not held or contained within the university. Study has a relation to the university, but only insofar as the university is not necessarily excluded from the undercommons that it tries so hard to exclude.

STEVPHEN: The particular question you're responding to was asked by Zach Schwartz-Weinstein on the history of non-instructional academic labor, which brings me to what I wanted to ask. I understand there's a much broader and deeper understanding of study that you're working on. But, your work started in the 1990s by looking at particular conditions of academic labor. So this is a question about how the broader conception of study fits into the more specific conditions of academic labor you're talking about. You're talking about how certain kinds of academic labor pre-empt collectivity or, almost because they encourage a very individualistic investment in the labor, they pre-empt that sort of broader project from emerging. So, is this something that is very particular to academic labor or is this something that is more general to forms of labor that require this investment? I guess my question is: how do you understand the relation between the specific forms of class composition of academic labor and broader patterns? I think it's easy for the specific to be conflated with the more general kind.

FRED: When I think now about the question or problem of academic labor, I think about it in this way: that part of what I'm interested in is how the conditions of academic labor have become unconducive to study – how the conditions under which academic laborers labor actually preclude or prevent study, make study difficult if not impossible. When I was involved in labor organizing as a graduate student, with the Association of Graduate Student Employees at the University of California Berkeley I was frustrated with the way that sometimes graduate student investment in thinking about themselves as workers was predicated on the notion that workers don't study. But this was more than just a romanticisation of authentic work and a disavowal of our own 'inauthenticity' as workers. It was that our image of ourselves as academic laborers actually acceded to the ways in which the conditions of academic labor prevented study. We actually

same decade, but also at the constitution of cooperatives, the development of time-banks and mechanisms of economic support as early as in the legislative production of the destitution of the asylum, it is clear that the dismantlement of the total institution has been material, not symbolic.

The destruction of locks and the fences, renouncing to the spaces of the asylum, trespassing the doorway and constructing always-open institutional sites in the city was not only about destroying the peculiar repression of the psychiatric institution. It was about breaking apart the institutionalisation of life built through the production of healthcare as a system, and of medicine as knowledge. The destruction of the place, Franco Basaglia says, is the limit to be inhabited in order to produce another place together: with the inmates, with the workers, with the nurses. It is not about abolishing a fence, it is about destroying it, in the most material sense. The radical deinstitutionalisation of the Trieste Psychiatric Hospital in the 1970s is in the first place a practice of violence, a re-appropriation of the risk of the incident by those to whom is denied their ability to act, the responsibility of actions, confined in the realm of the "force of things".

In the Basaglian conception of the institutional transformation, the problem of management is the problem of incident, in the sense of how to break apart the constrains that limit the responsibility of the users, but also of how to make this freedom something durable and sustainable. Famously commenting on Frantz Fanon's resignation letter from an Algerian mental healthcare department, Franco Basaglia affirms that in a time in which the revolution is "for obvious reasons" not possible, "we are forced to manage an institution that we deny".

The impossibility of revolution is an institutional impossibility: in dealing with the suffering of the people detained in the asylum, deinstitutionalisation cannot be a practice of destruction followed only in a second stage by new production. In the words of Franco Basaglia, the US therapeutic community following the radical critique of Erving Goffman has produced market, class, individualism: "abandonment and misery". In England, the antipsychiatric movement "has left people behind", those unable to escape the public institution and participate in the communes of Ronald Laing and David Cooper (Crimini di pace, cf. Guattari in Molecular Revolution).

On the contrary the question is how to destitute and institute, destroy and invent. Destroying the asylum and madness as institution, but also being capable of preserving a series of capabilities of the institution. The Trieste psychiatrist Giovanna del Giudice talks about these rights to refuge and asylum as a collective attempt of taking space to constitute a social practice of emancipation. Inventing the institution as a social organisation of knowledges, instruments, resources, places and times, immersed in urban life and capable of supporting this process, in the *constitutively difficult freedom of urban life* (Mariagrazia Giannichedda in Basaglia 2005).

"Perceive and compose" the city, would be the Lefebvrian way of putting it. Indeed, on this limit between violence and management, Trieste poses the question of change in a series of political and ethical relationships that are directly urban, because destroying the institution is not enough if another invention does not inhabit and compose a new place, where the former has been destituted.

This is the case of the park of San Giovanni. The park opens where the asylum closes and populates this institutional invention through the complex intertwining of different life-forms and initiatives: not only the University, the Healthcare system and other public institutions, but also cooperatives, plants, festivals, benches, campaigns, associations. The ecology of the park grows and invades in a wider urban political ecology, because it is immersed in the ambivalence of urban life, in the difficult freedom of the city.

The park is again a threshold where both nature and the city are always present, earth and contracts, gardeners and water, saws and lovers and five thousand roses: "but five thousands roses are still missing, and they are for me the sign of the city that is uncertain, they are the cypher of what is possible, of what has not become true in that true life that we wanted to live, for us, for the loonies, suffering brothers and sisters with whom we have done a long walk. A walk that took us far, but not as far as we hoped we would get (but much more far way than their lordship could even imagine). The rose that still does not exist calls for another time, another generation, another energy, another love. Of which no one for sure can today, especially today, make any prophecy: a prophecy done of men and women that can look, and listen, and watch, and touch, and smell, and use their all senses, and cultivate the concrete signs coming out of them: because capable of listening the rumour of life, and touching the earth, and watering the roses, and changing the things." (Franco Rotelli, 2015)

In the invention of this five thousands roses "to come" there is another dimension of the threshold that I would like to address here: a temporal threshold that is at the same time a challenge against the inevitable future and the possibility of an irreversible transition. In other terms there is an ambivalent dynamic between transformation and durability: the ability of making the traditional practice unstable and the possible transition durable.

Today this is the struggle happening around a series of protocols and practices, rules and laws: it is not only the attempt of producing a new Italian law for mental healthcare and, at the local level, a regional law that affirms a social understanding of care and health, determining obligations in the definition of budgets, and a profound reorganisation of the healthcare system in general. This is also a struggle around protocols and mechanisms to integrate and intertwine social and healthcare services with social practices, local networks, community dynamics and all the contradictions these practices bring. What really matters is how these laws and protocols can affect the threshold, how they can change the effect of the state on the doorsill of the Microarea where the institution becomes molecular, where workers, users, citizens meet, invent and act in connection with a series of tools, through a catalogue of practices, according

As an appendix

Annotation 7, How can we apply this thinking to existing and substantiated infrastructural objects (such as the organisational — art, design, education and policy — structures of adpe)?

Art: 'Shaping the Next Ten Years: Developing New Strategy for Arts Council England 2020-30', Arts Council England, UK

Design: Critical Media Lab, Basel

Policy: 'Making Cultural Infrastructure' Theatrum Mundi, Adam Kaasa and John Bingham-Hall, London, Paris

Education: European Forum for Advanced Practice, Europe

ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Shaping the next ten years

Draft strategy for consultation

Summer 2019

Making Cultural Infrastructure

Making Cultural Infrastructure

This is a report by Theatrum Mundi on a research project that asked "can we design the conditions for culture?"

The European Forum for Advanced Practices (EFAP), an informal forum of artists, theorists, philosophers, educators, performers, curators, musicians, urbanists, anthropologists and other cultural actors across Europe and beyond, has assembled to propose new ways of recognizing the values of contemporary cultural practices. The EFAP Charter for Advanced Practices takes the form of a preliminary communication that we hope will become an expanded conversation across the fields that have been at the forefront of significant shifts in what is recognized as research and of its place within the trajectory of practice. There is an investment here in new ways of multiplying and proliferating how practices instantiate forms of open source research as opposed to new forms of excellence. The EFAP Charter for Advanced Practices is an intentional address to peers and future researchers, one that recognizes the immense amounts of work taking place across the globe.

Our Challenges

This initiative has been propelled by several challenges.

A first challenge is a general recognition that the current paradigm in which we work is in fact a tragic one where, in Europe and elsewhere, educational and cultural institutions are currently subject to previously unimaginable levels of evaluation, monitoring, homogenization and financializing. Such immediate conditions negate hard-fought battles within cultural practice and research concerning race and migration, gender and sexuality, impoverishment and welfare, the need to decolonize knowledge and the need to include social justice within questions of epistemology. Subsequently the relation between practices, terms and institutions is amiss, does not reflect the burdens of responsibility under which they operate, does not recognize the exceptional strides they have been made and does nothing to actually advance the framework beyond display and certification.

A second challenge is to try and understand how practices have expanded beyond their original designation to become a forceful arena of textures, references and modalities that advance way beyond what may conventionally be expected of them. By knitting together a genealogy of the encounters between practices we hope to focus not so much on new forms as on new modes of coming together. This in recognition that a politics of coalitionality and mutuality is as important in the arena of knowledge production as it is in political struggles.

A third challenge is that artistic and cultural practices are so often called on to 'represent' social struggles or to bridge between arenas of hardship and privilege. Part of the challenge is how to think practices differently both substantively as knowledge and in their application as propositional forms. Not simply as artistic practices but also social, organizational, investigative and consciousness-raising forms of practice that redefine research. That are alert to opaque concerns, abstract specific instances and point to unimaginable possibilities; possibilities that invite unexpected conjunctions between conditions, knowledges and affects and invent new forms of intervening beyond commentary.

A fourth and final challenge: we must face the concern that value is in urgent need of reconfiguration within our world of practices. The forms of value that have dominated either as market worth or as satisfying antiquated notions of disciplinary knowledge that are evaluable in advance – have served us badly and limited the horizons to which we can aspire.

④ what kind of unbuilding?

porous exit?

Time-limited use?

Temporary use models?

① what is repeated/ what is built?

③

② where to cut? → 'discourse'? / structure? / practice?

what other ways to be with this infrastructure?

Bibliography

Ahmed, Sara, 'Orientations: Toward A Queer Phenomenology', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 12.4 (2006) <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/202832>

Arts Council England, *Shaping the next Ten Years* (Arts Council England, June 2019) <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/publication/draft-strategy-2020-30>

Barad, Karen, 'Nature's Queer Performativity*', *Kvinder, Køn & Forskning*, 1.2 (2012) <https://doi.org/10.7146/kkf.v0i1-2.28067>

Bingham-Hall, John, and Adam Kaasa, *Making Cultural Infrastructure* (Theatrum Mundi, November 2017) <https://theatrum-mundi.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/TM_MakingCulturalInfrastructure.pdf>

Butler, Judith, 'Bodily Vulnerability, Coalitional Politics', in *Notes Toward A Performative Theory of Assembly* (London: Harvard University Press, 2015) <https://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674967755>

Carse, Ashley, 'Nature as Infrastructure: Making and Managing the Panama Canal Watershed', *Social Studies of Science*, 2012 <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0306312712440166>

Condorelli, Céline, *Support Structures*, 2009 <http://www.celinecondorelli.eu/texts/book/>

Easterling, Keller, 'Disposition', in *Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space* (London: Verso, 2014) <https://www.versobooks.com/books/2163-extrastatecraft>

European Forum for Advanced Practices, 'A Charter for Advanced Practices', 2019 <https://advancedpractices.net/charter>

Forensic Architecture, *Counter Investigations: Forensic Architecture*, 2018 <https://www.ica.art/exhibitions/forensic-architecture-counter-investigations>

Halberstam, Jack, 'Unbuilding Gender Trans* Anarchitectures In and Beyond the Work of Gordon Matta-Clark', *Places*, 2018 <https://doi.org/10.22269/181003>

Illich, Ivan, 'Institutional Spectrum', in *Deschooling Society* (London: Marion Boyars, 1970) <https://monoskop.org/images/1/17/Illich_Ivan_Deschooling_Society.pdf>

Institutions as a Way of Life, *Critical Media Lab, Academy of Art and Design, University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland*, 2019, Photograph

Larkin, Brian, 'Promising Forms: The Political Aesthetics of Infrastructure', in *The Promise of Infrastructure* (Duke University Press, 2018) <https://comparativemedia.columbia.edu/sites/default/files/Promising%20Forms%20-%20The%20Political%20Aesthetics%20of%20Infrastructure.pdf>

Moten, Fred, and Stefano Harney, 'The Only Possible Relationship to the University Today Is a Criminal One', in *The Undercommons Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (Wivenhoe: Minor Compositions, 2013) <http://www.minorcompositions.info/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/undercommons-web.pdf>

———, 'The General Antagonism: An Interview with Stevphen Shukaitis', in *The Undercommons Fugitive Planning & Black Study*, Wivenhoe (Minor Compositions, 2013) <http://www.minorcompositions.info/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/undercommons-web.pdf>

Phillips, Andrea, 'Educational Investment: A Context for CAMPUS', *The Contemporary Journal*, 2019 <https://thecontemporaryjournal.org>

Public Practice, 'Public Practice' <https://www.publicpractice.org.uk/about>

Rassel, Laurence, 'Rethinking the Art School' (presented at Commoning the Institution, ZHdK, Zürich, 2018) <https://vimeo.com/269943587>

Rogoff, Irit, 'Infrastructure' (presented at Documents, Constellations, Prospects, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin: Former West, 2013) <https://formerwest.org/DocumentsConstellationsProspects/Contributions/Infrastructure>

———, 'Looking Away: Participations in Visual Culture', in *After Criticism: New Responses to Art and Performance* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005) <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9780470774243.ch6>

Salvini, Francesco, 'Instituting on the Threshold', *Transversal Texts*, Monster Municipalisms, 2016 <https://eipcp.net/transversal/0916/salvini/en.html>

Star, Susan Leigh, and Karen Ruhleder, 'Steps towards an Ecology of Infrastructure Design and Access for Large Information Spaces', *Information Systems Research*, 7.1 (1996) <https://doi.org/10.1287/isre.7.1.111>

Strelka, 'Strelka Institute' <https://strelka.com/en/idea/vision>

Thrift, Nigel, 'Remembering the Technological Unconscious by Foregrounding Knowledges of Position', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 22, 2004 <https://doi.org/10.1068/d321t>