Socialised Technologies, Cultural Activism, and the Production of Agency

Francesca da Rimini

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Certificate of Authorship/Originality

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Candidate

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Abstract

We are living in an era of unprecedented technological development, a post-industrial revolution with no end point in sight. Information communication technologies (ICTs) in particular have changed the nature of production dramatically, and the human mind, with its innate capacity for imagination, language, symbolic thought, and abstract reasoning, has become a crucial productive force. Post-autonomist theory contends that such “biopolitical” production could radically reorder social relations, as it both enables the formation of plural subjects desiring macro-level transformation and also offers this “multitude” the technological means for mobilising action. However, the theory has not accumulated many empirical studies of locally embedded, globally attuned projects of counter-power within “network society” to support its claims. This study enters the field of cultural production to gather data from key actors within three contrasting cultural activism projects to determine the extent to which information technology can operate as a productive force creating new social imaginaries and forms of political agency. The autonomously-organised projects are differentiated along geo-spatial and informational lines: citizen journalism in the newly-industrialising Periphery (Hong Kong), digital creativity in the global South (Jamaica), and network art in the global North (England). The research analyses how each project has adapted a diverse range of ICTs to create embodied cultural projects, contexts, and networks which then cross-pollinate and inspire other projects locally, translocally, and transglobally. The study found that first and foremost bare technology needed to be socialised by its constituent groups in order for it to be relevant and attractive to them. Socialised technology incorporates affective and experiential dimensions within technical and material structures. The methods of this socialisation differed dramatically amongst the groups, being influenced by a constellation of historical, social, cultural, and economic factors. Contextualised around specific projects, these technologies supported socially-engaged creative experimentation, open-ended play, cooperative labour, peer learning, and political action. Such techno-social processes frequently produced what I term “temporary affective spaces.” Continually evolving iterations of core and satellite projects generated not only material and electronic artefacts subsequently returned to the realm of the common, but also coalesced networked communities of practice. The research findings suggest that technology must be actively adapted by its users via community-specific iterations, and that such innovations must remain open to be freely shared and built upon by others, for technology to realise its potential to facilitate local, translocal, and macro level social transformation.

Tales from the Flexitariat: the Sadness of the Scientific Lamp Maker

I've seen him before. An older man, from another space-time when work and the rest of life remained distinctly separate, even for those for whom poverty forced to labour long and broken hours.

I come from these lines, the labouring masses. My people, on the whole, were working people. Cooks, waiters, clerks, typists, and a dancing girl, my English great-grandmother. Was this code for a prostitute I wondered, but my Pommie brother who's delved deep into working class culture tells me it could simply mean that she was a dancing girl.

The peasant heritage was illustrated by tales of my mother and her closest brother, Franco, shipped back from London in the 1920s to a family village in northern Italy. The ever-present hunger. Images of begging their grandmother for crusts of bread, which this kind woman would sometimes produce from her apron. This rural poverty had driven both my grandmother and grandfather from their respective villages to London, where they would eventually meet in Soho.

In one of our final late night kitchen table bonding sessions in London, Uncle Frank told me how he had been teased and called Pig Boy in this village. The relatives' home so cramped, he had been forced to sleep with the pigs. A warm expedient solution probably, but my uncle carried this humiliation for the rest of his life.

During one of life's mopey periods many years before I had heard my uncle's story, I had written some vignettes about an Italian pig farmer named Papa Z, who had tormented his young chattelled bride, his Gash Girl. Later, upon entering the 1990s rendering of cyberspace through the doorway of a rambling online world called LambdaMOO, I reprised this wretched tear-stained girl from her dead-end village life. Gash Girl transformed herself into a character whose exploits became known outside of the net via the techno-utopian currents criss-crossing media sectors in search of the new. The net was smaller back then, constructed of hamlets and towns rather than mega-cities.

For three years Gash Girl, the Puppet Mistress, explored deep screen play with distant paramours. The experiences shimmered with a fairytale quality, perhaps because the characters, and the unfolding/enfolding story lines they enacted, were constituted by the interplay of collective imaginations. We were creating a matrix of

ideas. A contemporary Chaucer's Tale would play itself out night after night amongst a group of strangers making their individual pilgrimages through foreign lands. Tiny human puppets, a wolf with thirty-seven personalities disguised in a man's skin, an incestuous gender-switching vampire, all building textual realms in which their fantasies could be enacted through the magic dust of tele-presence.

I took Gash Girl's life at LambdaMOO seriously. My project was to project awareness into another psychic persona, and to explore if that persona could manifest her own drives, needs and desires, discrete from my own. It was an experiment, a game, manifest through collaborative writing, mainly with people who were unknown to me in my embodied life. And it was also work, although I did not yet realise this.

This type of work falls squarely into current notions around labour being put forward by various philosophers, linguists, sociologists, and economists. As it happens, for historical reasons many of these theorists are Italian. They distinguish the forms of cognitive labour dominant in today's postindustrial economies from the physical labour which typified earlier agricultural, mercantile, and industrial societies. The mute labour of Ford's factory-line becomes the communicative labour performed by the micro-serfs, the web monkeys, the call centre cold caller, the financial analyst, the journalist, consultant, academic, and so on.

As this mental labour deals with intangibles and ephemerals, it is tagged 'immaterial labour.' The workers form a precarious, casualised and disaggregated work force. Yesterday's proletariat becomes today's *precariat*. Flexi-workers en masse, en virtualised masse at least, forming the *flexitariat*. Artists and writers are part of this generalised insecurity, and perhaps have been for some time, at least in the post-Enlightenment West.

I think Ken Bolton was onto this a long time ago, revealed by his poems which reference another day spent toiling in the Experimental Art Foundation's salt mines, or, after a particularly wretched day, the Gulag. Ken's communicative, cognitive labour expended in managing all the dark horses. The day job in the art book shop subsidising the poet's *real* work.

In their constitution of a new class, a class which is partially produced through the dense meshwork of today's global communication systems, the intercontinental precariat potentially hold enormous power. We are no longer the obedient People of Hobbes, but the anarchic multitude of Spinoza, and obedient to no man.

My people mainly worked for the man, whomever that man was. The known exception was my Italian grandfather. He had opened a cafe in Brixton, London, where his family worked like donkeys for him, the master. *Padre Padrone* set in the city,

without the goat fucking. The donkeys watched him gamble away the financial products of their labour until nothing was left, only debts, the orphanage, the streets, and the asylum. It was some legacy that the old man left behind. My life, as a so-called immaterial labourer, is one long coast down Easy Street compared to the experiences of those who came before me.

A few days ago I talked with that older man, the one from another time. As he doesn't know that I am speaking of him here, I will do him the courtesy of calling him X. X marks the spot where I rip other people's stories and weave them into whichever Persian carpet I'm making this week. Recently I watched *The Thief of Baghdad* and saw myself reflected in that rascal ragamuffin. I can't help but steal, it's the way I am made. A friend describing one of his many jobs once said, “We all left when there was nothing left to steal.” Perhaps I could say that about my life, but I don't want to hex myself.

So anyway, X has recently retired from his trade of scientific lamp making. Thirty years of interpreting people's drawings to make precision instruments from glass, and designing and making the tools to craft these objects.

The distinction between material and immaterial labour increasingly bothers me. Perhaps it was the beauty and poetry of the word 'immaterial' that first compelled me. But to pit the bulls of material and immaterial against each other in the ring of binary coupling now makes less sense.

As the scientific lamp maker works with his hands, manual dexterity is fundamental. Eventually, if someone can pass through the initial stage of six months of fruitless bumbling, they are rewarded with not only technical ability but confidence. It's this *confidence* that enables the apprentice to keep moving forward, to make ever more precise material objects.

Communication is surely central to the processes of learning a 'manual' trade. Teachers not only show with their hands what is to be done, but must explain. This is not the 'mute' labour of the factory (and was labour really ever mute anyway?). It is the audible labour of the workshop, the shed, the studio, and the bench. Fingers and lips speaking, singing even, when obstacles are overcome.

Over the phone, X speaks of “a dying trade.”

I ask him how it feels to be the last of a lineage.

“I'm very sad really,” he tells me.

And I can feel his sadness over the copper wires.

“I've always wished to pass on my skills to somebody.”

And I can almost see that invisible child sitting at the work bench next to X, listening and watching as he handcrafts the tiny instruments out of hot glass molasses.

There is material in the immaterial.

And immaterial in the material.

All labour can be spoken, sung, whispered, screamed.

And we are not mute, even if we might be barking mad.

Introduction

Technological development is inevitable. So are the differential social, cultural, political, and economic impacts which accompany it. Those who hold these views often concur that such development automatically returns a social good. More of the same, but for more people. This developmentalist argument frames technological evolution as a top-down, semi-coordinated phenomenon which ensures societal growth within advanced capitalism by supporting 'efficiency and creativity in social productivities' (World Congress on ICT for Development 2009). Hence, disadvantages must be tolerated, as benefits eventually will trickle-down to those currently excluded from, or disadvantaged by, this brainy new world.

An alternative view exists which argues that technology, and in particular information communication technology (ICT), is a productive force which will generate a radically different ordering of social relations. Like the first position, this proposition lacks detail on how this change might occur. Transformation cannot just arise from technology's magic dust. So does any empirical evidence exist to support the argument that advanced capitalism is producing the techno-social tools and communicative capacities which could ultimately destroy its own dominance? This question lies at the heart of my thesis as I enter the field of cultural production seeking answers.

Digital technology is pervasive, and we are in continual interaction with it, and impacted by the expressions of power it enables. In technologically-advanced societies our digital innocence has been ravished by corporate and state incursions (both wilful and unwitting) into the domain of the private. As Google Street View cars (unintentionally?) capture sensitive data from domestic computers on unsecured Wi-Fi networks, governments centralise the traces of our lives through digital smart cards, pledging security in spite of analogue accidents with lost databases and laptops.[1] Meanwhile, financial markets invent and trade ever more abstract products, pure data derived from bad seeds which have semi-collapsed national economies.

The corporate landscape of info-tech has changed dramatically since the 1990s, as hostile takeovers, mergers, and acquisitions consolidate the convergence of computing, telecommunications, media, and entertainment industries (Castells 2009).[2] The interconnectedness, ubiquity, pervasiveness, and persistence of ICTs simultaneously globalises capitalism and diffuses power. Social elites shift resources and production to

1 See O'Harrow 2005; UK's families put on fraud alert' 2007; Kiss 2010.

2 The military-industrial complex locks into this hive, as the war machine absorbs some of the "surplus" of "informational goods" the "New Economy" produces (Marazzi 2008: 151-156).

spatialised sites and embedded labour pools to reduce financial risk and social responsibility whilst maximising profits. Thus power becomes increasingly hard to identify. Until recently those bearing the disempowering brunt of informatisation have experienced technological change on an atomised, disaggregated level.

Yet these tendencies of technological acceleration, pervasiveness, and convergence are stirring change. When we collectively engage in cultural production via “autonomous networks of horizontal communication,” and use the “materials” of our “suffering, fears, dreams, and hopes,” we can influence social change, sociologist Manuel Castells (ibid. 431) argues, because we harness the same “mechanisms of power-making” as those which create “network society.” In advanced capitalist and market socialist societies people from a wide socio-economic base can access information, obtain goods and services, participate in cultural and political life, and develop social relationships in new ways. On the one hand, the stickiness of technology means work obligations sneak into the domestic realm, thieving our once-free time, fuelling resentment and exhaustion. On the other, the space for dissent and the production of radical subjects is now everywhere, as we, the factory, are everywhere.

The Research Problem and an Outline of its Theoretical Context

My key research question crystallises the thoughts above by asking:

> To what extent is information technology a productive force creating new collective forms of social imagination and political agency?

I employ the interrelated lenses of art and cultural activism to examine the nexus between the technological and the social, because, as I argue throughout this thesis, social change must be preceded by new social imaginaries, and the field of culture is an important terrain of collective imaginative production.[3]

My secondary question is:

> How is information technology socialised to create embodied cultural projects, contexts, and networks which cross-pollinate on localised, translocal, and transglobal levels?

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3 Two other terrains producing collective imagination are science and cosmology, both of which could be folded into the cultural field.

Much discourse around technology and society emanates from the field of sociology, with contributions also from economics and information science. Philosophers from Adam Smith and Walter Benjamin to Michel Foucault and Donna Haraway have demonstrated an interest in human/technological relations within the context of capitalism. Whilst being informed by various disciplinary perspectives including sociology, cultural theory, and software studies, my doctoral research particularly engages with key propositions emanating from Marxism, neo-Marxism, Autonomism, and post-Autonomism. My Literature Review unpacks core concepts by leading thinkers from these fields, and focuses particularly on current post-Autonomist discourses. For the purposes of this introduction I will sketch the historical context in which the theory developed.

Within a Marxian analytical framework, the concept of antagonism is two-sided. It signifies socio-political contestation, struggles over power to either maintain the status quo or to transform from below. As Marxian dialectics foregrounds the notion of contradiction, it follows that the social antagonism embedded in such conflicts can also generate solutions to the problems of power. Karl Marx conceived social conflict as class-based. Conflict arose from a small capitalist class (the bourgeoisie) in antagonism with a large working class (the proletariat) whose waged labour generated "surplus value" for capitalist accumulation (Lefebvre 1968: 100-102). Labour power was exploited to extract raw materials and produce commodities which circulated within global markets.

Marx analysed how his entrepreneurial capitalist contemporaries developed and employed new technologies in the mid-19th century during a period of massive industrialisation in England and parts of Western Europe. He posited that technological development was driven by capitalists' desire to free themselves of the unpredictable volatility of living labour which continually raged against the machines and alienated, deskilled, devalued existences. Marx's own empirical research led him to conclude that this historically-new working class potentially could use the industrial social-technological apparatus to combine its diverse struggles and eventually create a mass revolution that would overturn capitalism and birth a more equitable system.[4] As industrialisation had become the dominant paradigm of labour, the nascent urban

4 Marx pioneered the processes of workers-inquiry and co-research that the Italian o*peraismo* (Workerist) movement revived in the 1960s. In 1881 Marx investigated the "conditions of the French proletariat" because he believed the French worker movement with its "empty language and easy utopic thinking" needed to "situate their struggle in a more realistic terrain" (de Molina 2004a). He distributed a large questionnaire "throughout the factories of the country," to provoke workers to "think critically about their concrete reality" (ibid.).

working class could exert a powerful influence on other workforce sectors, leading eventually to an internationalised revolution.

In the 1960s and 1970s the Italian movements of *operaismo* (Workerism) and *autonomia* (Autonomy) recuperated some of these Marxian ideas and pushed beyond them by adopting a molecular approach. Philosophers, students, activists, and workers collectively analysed the concrete conditions of working life, using the material particularities of specific factories and urban neighbourhoods to understand the post-WW2 socio-economic transformation occurring on the macro level (Lotringer & Marazzi 1980; de Molina 2004a). One branch of *operaismo* focussed on how current conditions could be collectively understood, then exploited as a motor for radical social change.[5] Contemporary Italian society provided a "social laboratory" which evolved collaborative research methodologies encompassing factory and university occupations, and teach-ins. This emphasis on the social foregrounded the critical role of mass imagination and shared knowledge, although the praxis largely failed to engage with the fields of cultural expression and media (Bifo 1980; Raunig 2007). Although the movement was violently suppressed by the Italian state, with participants jailed or forced into exile, its intellectual legacy has remained, as evidenced by renewed international interest in post-Autonomist theory (Lotringer & Marazzi op. cit.).

By the mid-1970s a constellation of macro-conditions had produced a crisis throughout industrialised nations. The class struggle under Fordism crisis birthed both the paradigm of post-Fordism (that is, post-industrial, informational economies) and a nascent neoliberalism,[6] which in turn differentially transformed many parts of the

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5 For an overview of *operaismo* see de Molina (2004a). The "worker inquiries and co-research" movement, together with "feminist epistemology and women's consciousness-raising groups, institutional analysis, and participatory action research" are important "inspirational tendencies" influencing contemporary "militant and/or action research" (ibid.).

6 Neo-Marxist geographer David Harvey has written extensively on neoliberalism, describing it as a project which aims to restore the power of the ruling class. It does this through various mechanisms of dispossession (debt, gentrification, privatisation, etcetera), most of which require state support, contrary to neoliberal theory which contends that "individual liberty and freedom" are the zenith of civilisation, and therefore must be protected (Lilley 2006, no page numbers). This requires an institutional structure comprised of "strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade: a world in which individual initiative can flourish" (ibid.) The implication is that the state must both not interfere overly in the economy (unlike Keynesianism for instance), yet also should "use its power to preserve private property rights" and market institutions (ibid.). Some of the most powerful, poetic, and accessible writing on neoliberalism's impact (and a counter strategy—globalisation from below) has emanated from Zapatismo, an Indigenous social movement in Mexico. See, for

world over the next two decades (Harvey 2005, 2006). During this turbulent period, ICTs gained ascendancy, along with a form of capitalism in which information literally drove industrial machines, and also became a raw material in the form of ideas, symbols, brands, and so forth, from which to extract profits (Lazzarato 1996; Virno 2004; Hackett & Carroll 2008). This is informational capitalism or info-capitalism, simultaneously producing, and produced by, emergent class compositions of cognitive and creative workers, along with 'retooled' industrial workers.

Informational capitalism depends on the cognitive, communicative capacities of living labour, or "biopolitical labour" (Hardt & Negri 2009: 109). In the 19th century Marx (1867, no page numbers) likened capital to "dead labour" which existed "vampire-like" by "sucking living labour." Since the late 20th century an elite class has revivified the corpus of info-capitalism by capturing the mental processes of living labour. The powerful render ideas, knowledge, and symbols produced by (paid and unpaid) workers into profit and continued power (Castells 2009). The added value lies in workers' communicative aptitudes, and the social skills they develop *outside* of the workplace, and thus today's factory has extended to encompass the whole of life (Virno 2004). Co-operation is key, from the "affective labour" in the service and caring professions, to the analytical labour in the finance sector, to the symbolic labour fuelling the "creative industries" (Marazzi 1999). The new forces of production shaping society have an "immaterial" quality, with commodities becoming "transparent" to reveal traces of mental labour (Lazzarato 1996; Terranova 2004).

Post-Autonomists have made a strong claim that communicative cooperative labour, simultaneously driving and enabled by informational capitalism, prefigures radical social change. The shared imaginings and cooperative labour of new class compositions could trigger emancipation. These compositions form aspects of the "multitude," a term recuperated by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2004) from the 17th century Dutch Jewish philosopher Spinoza (who had taken it from Machiavelli), to denote a heterogeneous, differentiated multiplicity of individuals whose identity is *constitutive*. The multitude can be conceived as "autonomy plus association," (Hardt, quoted in Hawthorne 2006, no page number). It operates as a conceptual (and actual) counterpoint to the "people," the homogeneous, obedient mass subject conceived by Thomas Hobbes, Spinoza's conservative English contemporary. Whereas the people's *constituent* identity is constituted by the state, the contemporary multitude is a constitutive power formed by the internal assemblages, mechanisms and potential of informational capitalism (Hardt & Negri 2004). As the multitude is immanent (not transcendent) to capitalism, it will necessarily affect its host.

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example, the writings of key exponent Subcomandante Marcos (2002).

Research Design

My thesis engages with a central post-Autonomist claim: that technology is a productive force creating new collective forms of social and political agency striving for global liberatory change.[7] While post-Autonomist theory tends to smooth out cultural and spatial differentiations, such differences can test the theory. We need more empirical knowledge on how different groups mobilise technology to create locally embedded, globally attuned, and deeply networked contexts for change.

To test the propositions I developed a list of cultural activism projects which were developing and adapting ICTs to achieve specific social aims. From this broad terrain I selected three hitherto under-examined projects. These projects covered different informational fields and geo-spatial locations, allowing me to assess and compare their general fit with the theoretical propositions, and to speculate how their modes of particularity extends the theory. Additionally, the diversity amongst the cases could reveal universal tendencies indicating more generalised propositions. Ultimately the empirical study would spark my own speculative thoughts about the relation between radical socialisation of technologies and their emancipatory potential.

From these reflections my concept of “temporary affective spaces” or TAS arose, a rhizomatic line of flight shooting out from philosopher Hakim Bey’s hypothetical Temporary Autonomous Zones (TAZ) which had earlier inspired countless activist projects. Now I envisioned self-produced, self-managed socialised technologies used by companies of strangers to gather bodies and telepresences in temporary affective spaces. These spaces interbraided love, rage and hope, nurturing collective experimentation in hacking the future, and transmitting outcomes and possibilities across local/translocal/global networks.

Key Determinants in Selection of the Case Studies

My knowledge base of the transdisciplinary field where cultural activism and digital creativity intersect is informed by my wealth of experiences since the mid-1980s as an artist, arts manager, teacher, researcher, and (briefly) IT industry worker. This lived research is complemented by my Masters dissertation on artist-made softwares and politicised technologies (da Rimini 2005b). Others had already documented some exemplary projects of networked activism using ICTs such as Zapatismo's artful use of

7 The structure of this changed society could encompass the new “sensibility, way of relating” and “sort of kindness” which Felix Guattari (1980: 234) predicted would form the “revolution,” weaving in a “tenderness” partially shaped by the “feminist movement” and what we would now term queer politics.

the internet to build solidarity, and the transglobal Indymedia open publishing phenomenon (Notes from Nowhere 2003; Yuen, Burton-Rose, & Katsiaficas 2004; Rodriguez, Kidd, & Stein 2009a). A danger exists that the compelling spectacle of such stars eclipses minor constellations, rendering the amassed potential of the molecular semi-invisible, thereby weakening theoretical claims about widespread change.

Consequently I narrowed my focus, positing that the micropolitics of differentiated forms of practice could reveal aspects of the macropolitics of globalised info-capitalism. I aimed to select three projects emplaced in contrasting locations within the map of economic globalisation. Each project required a progressive/radical political vision, commitment to creative experimentation, distinctive modes of employing ICTs, discernible material outcomes, and an articulated social imagination. Well-selected case studies could thereby offer scope, depth and diversity to develop and test the thesis. Four determinants—**enchantment, equivalency, difference, and availability**—guided my final choices.

The initial determinant was that the cases needed to be **enchanting**, for both me and the project participants. The projects' symbolic power, how they resonated as ideal concepts and actual material processes, would potentially generate certain affects such as engagement, captivation, and commitment in adversity. Social change is generally preceded by a shift in collective social imaginations, and, before that, individual imaginations need to be sparked or enchanted. From the outset I had a hunch that affect would play an instrumental role in the projects' evolution.

A second determinant was that the cases needed to share fundamental measures of **equivalency**, to allow comparison of the same sorts of features within the theoretical framework. This equivalency would encompass *temporal*, *technological*, *social*, and *philosophical* elements.

In temporal terms, I wanted cases which were gathering momentum, and still developing their nodes, networks and platforms. Relative youthfulness of projects is an important energetic factor in the creation of new social imaginaries. This assumption is influenced by my own experiences, as I have witnessed organisations and projects born in the 1970s and 1980s counterculture glow desiccate and become irrelevant as individuals burnt out or capitulated to neoliberalism's rules (the death knell dealt by performance indicators, stacking arts boards with accountants and lawyers, etcetera). However, I did not rule out cases which had existed for some period as concepts or prototypes before being actualised. The crucial factor was that collective visions and programs still were evolving.

In terms of technological equivalency, the case needed to demonstrate an

innovative approach to their employment of ICTs. I would examine the cases as techno-social assemblages constituted by an interweaving of the technologies and the social relations formed around their creation, customisation, and deployment.[8] The cases needed to shape tools and adapt creative contexts to suit the political visions, social needs, and cultural goals of their user networks. I anticipated the cases would employ free and open source software (rather than being over-reliant on proprietary products), and could also be developing social software, specialised hardware, and interface devices themselves. If so, we could go beyond the widely-critiqued area of open source development and free software politics (Moody 2001) to explore the nexus between "open code" and "open culture" (Medosch 2005).

The third area of equivalency, the social dimension, is intrinsically related to the technological. The cases needed to demonstrate collective, creative labour, and co-operative decision-making processes. Although projects might not be organised along traditional anarchist lines, they needed to be experimenting with self-determination, autonomous social organisation, and participatory production. Each case should produce some form of participatory media or comparable media via cooperative forms of communicative and/or affective labour. Involvement in social networks which were supported by technological networks would offer another facet of social equivalency for comparison.

The final measure of equivalency would consider the philosophical basis of the cases. Each project needed to vigorously contest the dominant structures and logic of political power. According to the specific cultural circumstances and material conditions giving rise to the projects, this power might be framed variously as globalisation, neoliberalism, neocolonialism, New Labour, entrenched class privilege, Babylon, etcetera. No matter the nomenclature of dissent, it was vital that the cases connected collective critical awareness with creative production as their chosen means to counter the logic of informational capitalism.

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8 My thinking around techno-social assemblages is influenced by the work of Matthew Fuller (2003). Fuller was an early exponent of the proposition that software is culture, which fed into his subsequent writings on media ecologies. Fuller's assemblages draw upon many influences including Bruno Latour, and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. These ideas have been further hybridised and extended in key online fora centred on new media praxis such as Nettime (*Nettime mailing list archives* 2010) which I have long followed. While the social construction of technology field (SCOT) offers another theoretical lens and related methodologies for examining heterogeneous "sociotechnical ensembles" comprising "facts, artifacts, societies," I was seeking a more politically situated framework (Law and Hijiker 1997: 291).

The third determinant in my choice of cases was the need for each project to embody degrees of **difference**—particularly in terms of their geo-spatial, cultural, and sectoral dimensions. These differences would reflect and reveal the uneven topographies of informational capitalism as it differentially manifests across various planes (Harvey 2006). Many analyses of informational capitalism tend to blur the differences between how it plays out in different global locations, or across socio-economic strata, at most acknowledging a 'digital divide' (Manuel Castells being a notable exception). To determine whether the theoretical generalisations were valid across contrasting originating contexts I sought cases which exhibited qualitative differences in terms of kinds of politicised creative practice, and socio-spatial locations spanning the global South, North, and newly-industrialised regions.

The final determinant was **availability** of key personnel. The research required at least two people per case who either had been involved since the projects' inception, or had played key creative and organisational roles subsequently. They needed to agree to semi-structured interviews and follow-up discussions, possibly over a three year period. My intuition was that the affective, embodied, experiential dimensions of participation in ICT-enabled cultural activism could be a critical factor in a project's ability to engage people on an imaginative level. Consequently, I wanted participants who could discuss their own experiences of the projects, rather than representing either an 'official' or generalised view.

Overview of the Selected Case Studies

From my initial short list of a dozen possibilities, three projects best satisfied the selection criteria detailed above. These were Hong Kong In-Media in Hong Kong, the Container Project in rural Jamaica, and Furtherfield in London, England. Significantly, as these projects were variously situated at specific junctures within informational capitalism's uneven topography, they each could be considered as microcosms revealing both particularity and universality within the macrocosm of capitalism. Each project provided specific communities or networks with the means to collectively produce creative, socially-engaged cultural expressions of alternatives to the dominant paradigm. Viewed together, they contribute to a transglobal micropolitics of cultural activism.

Hong Kong In-Media is an internet-based, Chinese-language citizen journalism platform, focussed on building democratic political citizenship whilst also challenging neoliberalism. Its members have developed an “action media” praxis which interweaves collective symbolic gestures, discursive reportage, and self-reflexive analysis. The Container Project in a rural Jamaican enclave is a grassroots media digital creativity

project which "repatriates technology" with imaginative programs delivered via innovative material and social architectures. Its outreach programs connect marginalised communities in the Caribbean and beyond, with recent initiatives including mobile media labs, internet radio, and micro televisions. Furtherfield is an artist-run, London-based group that builds networked-based, participatory art systems supporting people to "Do It With Others" (DIWO). It combines innovative online platforms and social software tools with embodied, emplaced offline events to enable periods of deep experimentation by transient "neighbourhoods" of cultural activists.

Each project employs distinctive techno-social assemblages to foster collective social agency through symbolic, discursive, creative, and political actions. The nexus between each project's philosophical base and political motivations, and their embedded material circumstances, are key to my research. As scant English-language documentation existed for two of the projects (with Furtherfield as the exception), much of what I would be working with existed on the subjective plane. Consequently I sought a research method which offered a systematic way of analysing self-reflexive accounts of the social frictions and shared visions driving these projects.

Method

The method researchers employ to structure data gathering and guide interpretation impacts on both their hypotheses and the development of formal theories arising from the substantive theories. Initially I considered using an ethnographic methodological approach employing the participant observation method during residencies in Hong Kong, Jamaica, and England. Participant observation would both facilitate interactions with project initiators and also with their extended communities. Perhaps "multi-sited ethnography" could have offered a useful approach to look at ICT-enabled activism within info-capitalism, since it is predicated on "any ethnography of a cultural formation in the world system" as also being an "ethnography of the system" (Marcus 1995: 99). However, circumstances changed and all methods involving emplaced fieldwork became financially infeasible. Consequently, I reviewed alternatives and ultimately selected grounded research.

Grounded research is a qualitative method developed by sociologists Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss in the mid 1960s (Strauss & Corbin 1998; Charmaz 2006; Charmaz 2008).[9] It is a "*general methodology* for developing theory that is grounded in

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9 The method reflects and synthesises Glaser and Strauss's contrasting academic backgrounds in positivism and pragmatism respectively; they first used it in hospitals to analyse the process of dying (Charmaz 2006: 5-8). Sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists,

data systematically gathered and analysed" (Strauss & Corbin op. cit. 158, emphasis in original). This "*way of thinking about and conceptualising data*" emphasises that "generating theory and doing social research [are] two parts of the same process" (Strauss & Corbin op. cit. 163; Glaser 1978, quoted in Strauss & Corbin: 159). Researchers can "discover" abstract concepts and the "theory implicit in the data by utilising its...flexible principles and guidelines" (Dick 2005). According to Strauss (op. cit. 160-1), this methodology's "emphasis on theory development," distinguishes it from other qualitative approaches, especially when researchers move from developing substantive theories linked to their research topics to "high-level 'general' theory."

Concepts emerge through a series of structured analytical processes applied to substantive data: coding, memoing, and writing. "Rich data" sets are constructed from a mix of interpersonal processes such as "observations [and] interactions," and actual materials, and can include ethnographic material, open-ended guided interviews, and secondary textual sources (Charmaz 2006: 14, 3). This continual interplay between coding, interpretation, and writing typically leads the researcher to ask new questions, and to gather additional data in response to recurrent themes and patterns. The method requires the researcher to apply increasing degrees of abstraction to their data, eventuating in the formation of concepts which have the potential to be applied to other substantive data. In grounded theory "data collection, analysis, and theory stand in reciprocal relationship with one other" (Bowen 2006: 2).

Since its inception grounded theory has "evolved into a constellation of methods rather than an orthodox unitary approach" (Charmaz 2008: 161). However, despite some significant differences and disputes in the field, the quality of emergence continues to set it apart from many other qualitative research methods.

> Emergence is fundamentally a temporal concept; it presupposes the past, assumes the immediacy of the present, and implies a future....the present arises from the past but has new properties. These novel elements of emergence distinguish the present from the past and make it distinctive (Charmaz op. cit. 157).

In other qualitative methods investigators traditionally *start* with a hypothesis, which then directs their data collection and analysis methods. In contrast, the grounded theorist begins with a problem or subject of interest, and gathers data to illuminate the topic. Emergent methods such as grounded theory are "particularly well-suited for studying uncharted, contingent, or dynamic phenomena" (ibid. 155). Key

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educators, social workers and nurses employ the method (Strauss & Corbin 1998: 163).

ideas or themes become apparent as the researcher interacts with the data, especially when they apply "qualitative coding" to reveal underlying social or psychological processes in the studied situations (ibid. 3). By comparing data derived from "empirical events and experiences," and refining the codes accordingly, the researcher makes general observations about phenomena, and follows "hunches" (ibid.) in new directions. Consequently, a *conceptual density* can evolve, a "richness of concept development and relationships—which rest on great familiarity with associated data checked out systematically with these data" (Strauss & Corbin op. cit. 160).[10]

From this perspective, the literature review is driven by the research process rather than initiating it. Consecutive sets of analysed data suggest the literature directions to be pursued. Instead of *deductive* logical reasoning guiding the research process, grounded theorists use the technique of *inductive analysis*. Hence, "the patterns, themes, and categories of analysis come from the data; they emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis" (Patton, 1980, p. 306, cited in Bowen 2006: 2). The production of the hypothesis occurs *after* all the other steps have occurred, although its gestation occurs on conscious and subliminal levels throughout the research period.

So although openness and flexibility are built into grounded research's techniques, the structured processes bring to the emergent formal or abstract theories an intellectual rigour lacking in some other methods.

> Theory consists of *plausible* relationships proposed among *concepts* and s*ets of concepts*. (Though only plausible, its plausibility is to be strengthened through continued research.) Without concepts, there can be no propositions, and thus no cumulative scientific (systematically theoretical) knowledge based on these plausible but testable propositions (Strauss & Corbin 1998: 168).

At the same time grounded theorists do not adhere to notions of external or unitary truths but instead recognise that "all interpretations...are temporally limited...always provisional, [and] limited in time" (ibid. 171). Researchers are not apart from their studied worlds but are part of "contemporary social reality" by being "immersed in certain societies, subject to current ideas and ideologies" (ibid.). Thus, the influences

10 Conceptual density is not to be confused with ethnography's "thick description," although there are some parallels in the iterative analytical and interpretative processes which the researcher undertakes. The ethnographer confronts a "multiplicity of complex conceptual structures... superimposed upon or knotted into one another...which he [sic] must contrive somehow first to grasp and then to render" (Geertz 1973: 10).

of "contemporary intellectual trends and movements, including ethnomethodology, feminism, political economy, and...postmodernism"[11] on the researcher can be acknowledged overtly for how they contribute to the method and its output (ibid. 164). Inevitably, theories researchers produce will be "embedded 'in history'" (ibid. 172).

I was attracted to grounded theory in part because its inductive techniques loosely mirrored the research methods I use as an artist. My creative projects arise from an affective and intellectual engagement with political and social concerns. Gender politics within technology, the construction of madness as a form of social control, sexual violence, incarceration of asylum seekers, and the militarisation of outer space are just a few themes I have explored. Gathering rich data from fieldwork and search engines, successively analysing themes through journal writing processes, elaboration of categories from comparative notes, and ongoing literature searches are integral to my art praxis. Grounded theory encourages "creative problem-solving and imaginative interpretation," mirroring the essential processes of art-making (Charmaz 2008: 156). Whereas in my art practice I did not necessarily derive *explicit* categories from the continual reworking of notes, the groundwork enabled me to think abstractly, particularly in long-running projects. In art you produce objects, relations, and projects rather than hypotheses, but often it is only *after* a work's completion that you (might) understand which problem it was that you initially set out to solve.

Grounded theory recognises that researchers do not come to their subjects cold, but instead hold "background assumptions and disciplinary perspectives" that "alert them to look for certain possibilities and processes in their data" (ibid. 16). Sociologist Herbert Blumer (1954) posited the notion of "sensitising concepts" in the mid 1950s. These concepts give researchers "initial ideas to pursue," sensitising them to "ask particular kinds of questions" about their topics (ibid.). Sensitising concepts "draw attention to important features of social interaction and provide guidelines for research" (Bowen op. cit. 3). For example, when researchers are "theoretically sensitive...to issues of class, gender, race, power...the more attentive they will be to these matters" (Strauss & Corbin op. cit. 173). This validation of the researcher's prior experiences and subjective frameworks encouraged me to draw upon my own background of combinatory practices which wove cultural activism with emergent art forms and media art, expanding the frame of interviews and guiding specific literature search trajectories. However, grounded theory also warned against making too many assumptions because of specialised knowledge.

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11 Contemporary social inquiry researchers might equally be influenced by media activism, global justice, queer politics, along with various incarnations of free software, environmental, anti-nuclear, climate change, and anti-austerity student movements.

Following the work of sociologist Robert K. Merton in the 1950s, the positivist Glaser had encouraged researchers to build “middle range” theories consisting of “abstract renderings of specific social phenomena...grounded in data” (Charmaz 2006: 7). Such theories would contrast with the “'grand' theories of mid-century sociology that had swept across societies but had no foundation in systematically analysed data” (ibid.).[12] Strauss's Chicago school pragmatism emphasised humans as “active agents...in their worlds, rather than...passive recipients of larger social forces” (ibid). People build “structures for engaging in processes,”and “subjective and social meanings” rely on language and emerge through action (ibid.).

Grounded theory offers “flexible guidelines,” and a “set of principles and practices” rather than “prescriptions or packages” (ibid. 9). Just as the method encourages researchers to remain open about their topics, and to use techniques such as open-ended questioning to discover the implicit themes and social processes embedded in the studied situations, the theory itself embodies the quality of openness. I adapted those parts of the method that fitted my own research style such as the interviewing techniques, ways of contextualising rich data, coding and memo-writing processes. I also abstracted the data by applying more art-influenced intuitive processes to the intellectual scaffolding grounded theory had given my rich data.

Attending to, and working with, hunches and intuitions, is valued in grounded theory. Inductive logic starts the research process but then “moves into abductive reasoning as the researcher seeks to understand emergent empirical findings” (Charmaz 2008: 157). This can transport the researcher into “unanticipated theoretical realms” (ibid.).

> Abductive reasoning aims to account for surprises, anomalies, or puzzles in the collected data. ...[It] invokes imaginative interpretations, because the researcher imagines all possible theoretical accounts for the observed data and then forms and checks hypotheses until arriving at the most plausible interpretation... Abduction allows the intuitive interpretations of empirical observations and creative ideas that might account for them (ibid.).

Herein lies a potential problem for the researcher who comes to grounded theory

12 This has lead me to reflect upon a comparable gap in post-Autonomism, that is, the paucity of empirical examples beyond the obvious and the generalised to support its own “grand theories.” This lack defangs their arguments, a problem I return to in the Literature Review.

with the intention to use a specific theoretical framework to understand the dynamics of a complex emergent system in which their object/s of study are embedded. In my case, I realised early on that post-Autonomism offered some useful conceptual tools for considering the general dynamics of informational capitalism and its inherent possibilities for triggering and enabling radical social recomposition. One cannot pretend to come to the subject of capitalism as a child (although that could make a great art project). But post-Autonomism's Achilles' heel, that is, its lack of many real world examples to support its claims, gave me the freedom to use the grounded theory method without preconceived notions of what its processes would likely reveal about my cases specifically. Moreover, the final conclusions that I would eventually reach, including the conceptualisation of "temporary affective spaces," emerged not from my confident grasp of post-Autonomist theory but from the various iterative analytical processes grounded theory requires.

How did I apply grounded theory to my case studies? After confirming the three case studies I identified potential interviewees. Although my original intention was to interview the same number of people from each project, certain planned interactions did not eventuate. As a result, more interviews were conducted with Container Project associates, which was the case with the least existing documentation. As Furtherfield and Hong Kong In-Media had a strong online presence (in the form of web projects and texts), plus some visibility in a handful of published works, the raw data was roughly equivalent across the cases.

The rich data I gathered included my interviews with project participants, their published articles, my own conferences and workshops notes, and other materials contextualising the case studies.[13] By collating, memoing and analysing data I extracted larger themes resonating across all three projects. Later I enfolded these currents as an evidential thread into my speculative discussions of informational capitalism.

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13 Although I did not undertake residencies with the case study projects, I have had a series of fortuitous encounters with key people from each project between 2006-2010. In April 2006 I met and interviewed Hong Kong In-Media's Oiwan Lam. Later that year I co-curated the *Coding Cultures* project on cultural activism with d/Lux Media Arts in Sydney, allowing me to invite Container personnel mervin Jarman (sic) and Camille Turner to Australia in March 2007 as workshop facilitators, which also enabled me to interview them. As Editor of the modest anthology *A Handbook for Coding Cultures* I commissioned texts by Container Project, Hong Kong In-Media, and Furtherfield members—more rich data. In April 2007 Oiwan Lam and Iam-Chong Ip presented papers on Hong Kong In-Media at OURMedia in Sydney, and I both attended their sessions and met later with them. In September 2007 I conducted individual interviews with Furtherfield's founders Ruth Catlow and Marc Garrett in London. In March 2010 I reinterviewed mervin Jarman when he visited regional South Australia for a workshop.

The methodical noting and coding required by the grounded theory approach alerted me to topics embedded in the participants' own words, as the researcher must read and re-read texts in an active fashion, annotating and progressively identifying and refining ideas and themes that emerge from the data. I saw how interviewees would foreground specific historical narratives, and ideological or cultural assumptions, or how other threads would reoccur as leitmotifs. These themes fed into the structure of my case study chapters, determining topics that might at first appear tangential, but had clear import as they had recurred throughout conversations, emails, interviews, and published texts. These emergent ideas, themes and topics, in combination with the literature review, gave flesh to the cases' shared analytical structure.

Thesis Outline

Chapter One, the literature review, examines informational capitalism, anchoring it to earlier expressions of capitalism from Feudalism to Fordism. As capitalism's leading edge transitioned from an industrial paradigm to a post-Fordist, post-industrial paradigm and work encompassed the whole of life, new networked-based forms of social organisation arose. Crucial post-Autonomist concepts—immaterial labour, biopolitical production, the cooperative creation of the common, and the multitude—offer a way to interpret these changes and make future predictions. I draw upon seminal texts by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Maurizio Lazzarato, Christian Marazzi, Tiziana Terranova, and Paolo Virno. From this literature review I have derived four lines of analysis to be applied to the case studies: drivers, platforms and processes, specificity, and liberation.

The next three chapters form the core of the thesis. Chapter Two discusses Hong Kong In-Media, highlighting the prevailing political conditions, constricting media landscape, and the 2005 anti-WTO protests which combined to drive this initiative's formation. The project interweaves collective, self-reflexive discursive and symbolic processes within the productive paradigm of “action media,” as demonstrated by a multifaceted campaign to preserve a stand of university campus trees. This campaign in turn triggered awareness of overarching issues about urban planning, corporatised education, and political participation. Elements of cultural and geospatial specificity, particularly the nexus between neoliberalism and processes of privatisation and gentrification, emerged in a battle to preserve two ferry piers, with citizen reporters' investigative work reframing issues and popularising the campaign. Activists across the South Asian region share a collective imagination which rejects neoliberalism in favour of emergent participatory forms of democracy, as evidenced by two online and print projects of media activism, *Interlocals* and *Info-rhizome*.

Chapter Three looks at the Jamaican Container Project, tracking the transition of its founder's early experiences of poverty, gangs, and survival on the street through to his transformational encounters with digital arts. I introduce the concepts of "technological repatriation," street technology, and social architecture by referencing specific Container initiatives. Traces of specific historical and cultural influences including slavery, Garveyism, and Rastafari have influenced the Container's approach to self-empowerment. Artist residencies and digital storytelling programs are key elements of this approach. Economic liberalisation, endemic poverty, and political violence in Jamaica create a desire for liberation from suffering. The Container engages with this yearning by triggering collective imaginations via participatory street corner projects such as the iStreet Lab and microTV.

Chapter Four takes Furtherfield in England as its subject, sketching three of the project's drivers: a reaction against the values associated with Young British Art, and inspiration derived from the earlier cultural movements of Situationism and Fluxus. The key concept of Do It With Others is unpacked with reference to the social and creative processes facilitated by two network art platforms, *FurtherStudio* and *VisitorsStudio*. Aspects of Furtherfield's geographical and cultural specificity are drawn out through the narrative of early British Punk with its Do It Yourself ethos, resonating through to Bristol's alternative cultural renaissance in the 1990s; the internet-based *Furthernoise* sound art platform embodies these influences. Furtherfield's liberatory goals find expression through their concept of socially-engaged creative neighbourhoods, and their commitment to media art and democratisation, both of which play out in the *Rethinking Wargames* and *DissensionConvention* projects.

In the Conclusion to this thesis I reflect back upon these three diverse cases, identifying both similarities in their praxis and differences in their application. This material evidence provides the basis to take the discussion to a more abstract level, where I make some observations about the relationship between the social and the technological, in light of a critical evaluation of my theoretical framework. My findings conclude that although information communication technologies materially enable new electronic contexts for autonomously-organised discussion, production, and mobilisation around social and cultural issues as the post-Autonomists argue, the formation of new kinds of collective agency requires something greater than "bare technology."

Humans have always adapted their tools to suit their circumstances, and this tendency applies to our most recent digital technologies. Groups engaged in diverse struggles around democracy, poverty, and cultural participation have drawn upon intellectual, technical, and creative resources within their own communities and from

the wider networks with which they interact in order to socialise the tools which are at the core of biopolitical production. Socialised technology builds in dimensions beyond the technical, valuing the affective and the experiential. As our tools become closer to extensions of our full selves, when they become holistic and expansive, entering the domain of the common to be further adopted and adapted in via community-specific iterations, then their potential for facilitating social transformation on micro and macro levels is deepened.

With these conclusions in mind, let us turn now to survey the historical currents and contemporary dynamics of informational capitalism, from the perspective of post-Autonomist theory.

Chapter One, Literature Review

Informational Capitalism: a Lens for Examining Contemporary Power

Capital is essentially a "*social relation*" Marx argued, and specifically, the "constant reproduction of a social relation via the creation of surplus value via the production of commodities" (Hardt & Negri 2009: 136, emphasis in original). What happens to this social relation when almost every aspect of existence, including the private/intimate and the common, is treated as something to be commodified? Does the integrated but still unruly system of global capitalism inspire and enable people to both decommodify what has been reified, and also to build collective forms of political agency? If so, which dynamics and mechanisms are in play? These questions are key to my thesis.

As a globalised system of production, exchange, and accumulation capitalism has undergone a series of passages. Some, like Marx, consider capitalism as an *evolutionary* model of social relations which follows a "deterministic logic of progress" creating "spatial hierarchies" and cyclic expansion and crisis (Hardt & Negri 2009: 83-85). Others describe it as "revolutionary" in that it is continually "fomenting inequality and provoking unrest" (Lotringer 2004: 18). An alternative view stresses early capitalism's *counter-revolutionary* nature, driven by an alliance of feudal merchants, aristocrats, and religious orders responding to the centuries-long struggle by the "medieval proletariat" (Federici 2004: 21).[14]

Capitalist society is characterised by an elite class who own the means of production, and a majority class who must flog their labour-power in order to survive. Capitalist control over labour primarily relies upon "invisible, internalized laws" which structure and naturalise hierarchical relationships (Hardt & Negri 2009: 7). Today, this depersonalised domination is becoming increasingly networked in an informatised world, according to Castells (2009: 418), who distinguishes between "networking power, networked power, [and] network-making power" differentially exerted by a transglobal elite of corporate moguls, investors, and political actors. Financial networks are the "heart" of capitalist power in a "network society," and as this society is global we all "live in global capitalism" (ibid. 424).

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14 Feudal capitalism "destroyed" the imaginative and real possibilities unleashed by struggles which had radically reformulated gender and class relations, argues historian Silvia Federici (2004: 21-22).

My thesis engages with this paradigmatic model of advanced capitalism. Variously conceptualised as digital capitalism, cognitive capitalism, or informational capitalism, it spawns a digital economy which constitutes information society, knowledge society, or network society (Boyle 1996: 5-12; Castells 2000; Berry 2008: 41-78). This spawns new heterogeneous classes of rulers ("Venture Capitalists," "Digerati," "Netocracy"), and workers ("Proletarianised Professionals," "White-Collar Proletarians," "Digital Artisans") (Barbrook 2010: 21). The entire system is underpinned by old forms of industrial capitalism, including the extraction of oil, coal, ore and rare metals, and the factory production of components and commodities.

My theoretical framework interweaves perspectives from neo-Marxism, Autonomous Marxism, and post-Autonomism. Their general argument is that the modern working class can potentially lever capital's information communications technologies to liberate themselves from that "exploitation that transforms human life into a working death on credit" (Bifo 1980: 152). For a class to become political actors they must first build "internal communication" said Marx; today ICTs can assist radical class recomposition, argue Hardt and Negri (2004: 123). By determining how people materially operate within informational capitalism we can uncover how "capitalist exploitation and control" functions, which should suggest how we might construct a project of "liberation from capital" (Hardt & Negri 2009: 131).

Naturally other approaches to this field of study exist. The Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) theory which springs from the Science and Technology Studies area is one example (see Footnote 8). The related actor-network theory (or ANT, of which sociologist and anthropologist Bruno Latour is a leading exponent) could have also generated categories of analysis to interpret the material-semiotic networks created both by info-capitalism and by my cases. However, I have chosen to focus my line of interpretation on post-Autonomist theory, because I consider that it most directly offers a comprehensive political critique of the technology as a social force.

My hypothesis that informational capitalism is generating new collective forms of radical agency is directly drawn from post-Autonomist discourse. Yet although I acknowledge that this theory has reinvigorated discourse and seeded new concepts across many fields of critical practice, I contend that it is hampered by a paucity of concrete examples grounded in social reality. A lack of empirical evidence weakens any theory. For example, those subscribing to conservative models of social change often uncritically use blanket statistics from supranational institutions (such as World Bank figures on poverty reduction) rather than localised sociological studies to substantiate claims that globalisation produces positive 'trickle-down' effects. Similarly, much post-Autonomist theory combines a broad brush approach with obvious examples such as the

strategic and tactical uses of ICTs by anti-globalisation movements and the Zapatistas. Meanwhile it ignores the myriad of lesser-known networks and activities from a diverse transglobal cultural terrain which could test and refine their propositions (see Cunningham's (2008, no page numbers) critique of the theory's "lack of specific contemporary examples...that might add flesh to the immaterial bones of a post-autonomist reading of Art"). Here is the gap between theory and practice to which socially grounded research such as my own can contribute.

A snapshot of the Enclosures, slavery, and early industrialisation begins this chapter, leading into the scientific underpinnings of industrial capitalism—Taylorism and Fordism. As the subsequent productive paradigm of post-Fordism emerged, its cooperative linguistic processes simultaneously exploited and reignited collective intelligence, as technological development opened virtualised spaces for rebellious subjects to gather. Marx's concept of the "general intellect" is untethered from the elite's machines to become embodied within those "biopolitical" workers who animate those same machines (Virno 2004). The network becomes the defining techo-social form of our era, with the Internet as uber-network (Terranova 2004). Intelligent life cohabiting networks produce the common, a milieu for the seeding of social experiments and political insurrections, using "bodies and time" in ways "different from and antithetical to the capitalist use" (Holdren & Shukaitis 2006: 2). Immanent to informational capitalism is a plural political subject which the post-Autonomists name the *multitude* (Virno 2004; Hardt & Negri 2004, 2009). They assign this multitude a dual role: to prefigure and engineer a planetary transformation. Before forecasting the future however, we need to understand how the present system came to be.

Capital's Evolution from the Enclosures to Post-Industrialism

Enclosures, Slavery, and Early Industrialisation

The seeds of contemporary informational capitalism were sown in Renaissance Europe from the 15th through the 17th centuries during a period marked by scientific discovery, applied technological developments, sanctioned resources theft and kidnapped labour, cultivation of foreign markets, and financial speculation. These actions signified the incremental "industrialisation of class war," the elite's systematic response to attempts by peasants and artisans to "rearticulate the commons" (P. M. 2006: 49). The "Enclosures" were massive state-legislated land expropriation across Western Europe transferring commonly-held productive and subsistence resources (the "Commons") to private ownership, causing social upheaval and class recomposition. Livelihoods were destroyed, poverty was mass-criminalized, and the dispossessed

abandoned their villages, becoming vagabonds (Polyani 1968: 34-39; Federici 2004: 57-58, 82). Traditional stable forms of subsistence and exchange were replaced by the alienating uncertainty of deskilled wage labour, transforming the social fabric. Anti-Enclosures struggles lasted over two centuries, as people across Western Europe resisted the imposed changes (Polyani 1968: 77-85; Linebaugh & Rediker 2000: 18-19; Federici 2004: 72-73).

Expanding entrepreneurial and merchant classes exploited the social instability, putting to work the disempowered, nomadic mass of people aggregating in the rapidly urbanising regional centres, epitomised by the English mid-North's "cultural wastelands" (Polyani 1968: 99). The trans-Atlantic slave trade burgeoned during the 17th and 18th centuries, and "triangular trade" took slavery to an industrial level: England, France and Colonial America provided ships and industrial exports, Africa the kidnapped "human merchandise," and the colonial plantations agricultural produce and new markets (Williams 1966: 51-52). "Our enlightenment was based on time lent to us by slaves," states P. M. (2006: 49). While Jamaica financed England's Industrial Revolution slaves across the New World drove technological development elsewhere. Eventually their networked insurgencies convinced industry to replace intransigent, high-maintenance enslaved bodies with machines.

By the mid-19th century a semi-globalised, liberal market economy was forming. The textile industry opened the new industrial era, progressively mechanising primary processing of raw materials, and secondary production of woven materials (Essinger 2004). The logic of industrial capitalism interwove the interests of political economists, government agents, inventors, and entrepreneurs, reproducing existing hierarchies and transitioning modern societies to full market economies where everything is treated as a commodity to be bought and traded: nature, labour, machines, and goods (Polyani 1968: 40-42).[15]

Waves of dissent and revolts rippled throughout industrialising nations as people experienced their embodied knowledges devalued, and skills fragmented and semi-automated. The industrial worker emerged as a new class subject from the cradle of the factory, its parents the "circuits of communication" and working conditions which

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15 The logic continues under informational capitalism. The annual World Economic Forum in Davos demonstrates that wealth accumulation by elites via the enterprises they own (and by extension, capitalism's unfettered expansion) depends upon state intervention (Hardt & Negri 2004: 167-176). "*No economic market*" including the so-called free market, "*can exist without political order and regulation*" (167, emphasis in original). Paradoxically, this does not deter corporate practices like tax evasion which might weaken the state.

required cooperative work around a “common machine” (Hardt & Negri 2004: 123).[16] Meanwhile, the state remained on capital's payroll, using its policing and legal apparatus to criminalise and discipline rebellious collective subjects such as the Luddites (Linebaugh & Rediker op. cit. 304-305).

Despite resistance from below, industrialisation literally gathered steam, and the principle underlying the textile looms' use of interchangeable punch cards (software) to program machine output was applied to other sectors of material production and social engineering (see, for example, the political history of IBM’s automated calculating machines in Black (2001) linking informatisation to how fascism played out in Germany). Although private technological research often received public funding, innovations could be privatised through patents, which advantaged both individual industrialists and the governments of the nation states to which they belonged (ibid.).

Three Productive Paradigms: Taylorism, Fordism, and Toyotaism

The Industrial Revolution had heralded a “scientific model” of production to enhance the efficiency and profitability of business (Marazzi 2008: 50). In the late 19th century, American industrial engineer Frederick Taylor (1911) wrote a monograph, *The Principles of Scientific Management,* advising how businesses in any sector could increase worker efficiency by dividing complex or simple tasks into precise steps which could be monitored by overseers.[17] Extensively adopted, these recommendations created a paradigmatic shift later known as Taylorism.[18] The application of Taylorist principles of the division of labour and fragmentation of tasks further deskilled workers by converting unique embodied artistic intelligence into standardised work flow formulae generating monotonous manual labour.

Fordism soon followed. Based on early 20th century automotive manufacturing practices pioneered by Henry Ford in the United States, this “comprehensive system of social organisation” was emblematic of “economic modernisation” with its “economies

16 This combination distinguished and aided the radicalism of the urban worker in comparison with peasants' “incommunicability” and spatial disaggregation. Hence peasants needed another political subject to represent them, Marx had argued (Hardt & Negri 2004: 123).

17 Taylor systematically applied the ideas of 18th century economist and moral philosopher Adam Smith to the management of labour. Smith had argued that industrialists' profits and national power could be maximised by compartmentalising labour tasks.

18 The *Work Methods Manual* (Barnes 1944) demonstrates the influence of Taylorist principles on a diverse range of sectors, with work flow diagrams advising how specific tasks can be made more efficient, from assembling a carton, to typewriting, to even hospital operating room procedures.

of scale and large systems of production and exchange" (Dyer-Witheford 1999: 55-56; Hardt & Negri 2004: 112). Fordism's highly centralised factory model spatially concentrated 'mute' workers clocking on to perform coordinated, repetitive tasks on semi-mechanised assembly lines. Space, time, and actions were externally regimented and controlled in the Fordist labour model.[19] Workers produced mass commodities which were shipped out to market, and their relatively high wages ensured that they themselves were the main mass market for consumer goods until the 1970s.

Together Taylorism's micro-control of the "immediate productive processes" and Fordism's "regulation of the social cycle of reproduction" transformed capitalist production (Hardt & Negri 2000: 267). Paradoxically, the regimentation of workers and wage regimes increased the "anarchy" of markets, prompting the development of the Keynesian welfare state with its "macroeconomic regulation of society" (ibid. 240-242). From a post-Autonomist perspective, this produced a "*disciplinary society*" in which patterns of "subordination" extended across the "entire social terrain" (ibid. 243, emphasis in original). A cluster of geopolitical and social forces triggered a collapse in the 1970s, forcing another "technological transformation" which subsequently changed the "*very composition of the proletariat*" (ibid.).[20]

Marx's method of historical materialism uses the concept of "historical tendency" to illuminate dynamic paradigm shifts in the logic of capital. Paradigmatic organisational models created in one sector tend to be adapted by other sectors, as the pervasive adoption of both Taylorist and Fordist principles demonstrates (Hardt & Negri 2004: 120-121). At any time, although one form of labour might be quantitatively dominant, another form might be qualitatively dominant, diffusing its structural forms and processes throughout other sectors. For example, farming has become progressively industrialised, centralised, and corporatised (although this general historical tendency

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19 The hybridised Taylorist/Fordist model also suited modernisation programs of the socialist regimes of Lenin's Russia and Mao's China, argue Hardt & Negri (2000: 248).

20 Although the complex, interrelated political, social, and fiscal crises which occurred across many industrialised nations in the 1970s shared some general features, in localised terms each crisis manifested uniquely, reflecting the interplay between national and municipal governments, unions, corporations, and other actors. See, for example, Marazzi's (2008: 14-21) analysis of the "New Economy's" evolution in the United States, linking the currents of financial deregulation, corporate welfare, social spending, and increasing financialisation. The end result was the "rearticulation of state and entrepreneurial power over the naked lives of the urban proletariat," (17) a position congruent with Harvey's (2005, 2006) exposition of how neoliberalism practically achieves its aims. Many of the essays in Lotringer & Marazzi (1980) detail the form of the Italian crisis building since the 1950s which culminated in the State's bloody "strategy of tension" in the late 1970s.

remains geo-spatially differentiated), and the consequent deskilling and impoverishment of rural workers mirrors the experience of factory workers (ibid. 119-121).[21]

If the paradigm shift from agricultural and raw materials extraction to industrialisation was equivalent to economic "*modernisation*, then the subsequent passage to the domination of services and information has been a "process of economic *postmodernisation*, or rather, *informatisation*," proposes Hardt (1999: 90, emphasis in original). The gradual informatisation of the tertiary production sector (that is, the services sector) flowed through to secondary production, with "informationalised industrial processes" typifying the apex of contemporary manufacturing (ibid. 93).

The Japanese company Toyota pioneered this model of informatised industrial production. Domestic conditions including a financial crisis, strikes, and the Korean war in the 1950s post-war nation rebuilding period had negated a Fordist approach to mass market consumerism, explains post-Autonomist economist Christian Marazzi (1999: 18-19). Instead Toyota evolved a new paradigm (later dubbed "Toyotaism") focussing on "lean production," and incorporating informatics advances into the heart of manufacturing processes (ibid.). The "Total Quality Management" method developed by Japan-based statistician William Edwards Deming was also crucial. Toyotaism's Just-In-Time (JIT) method pulled market information into the factory so that assembly lines could be rapid retooled in direct response to consumer demand, in a "reversal" of Fordism's forced supply to create demand (Marazzi 2008: 49). Team work was integral to the production process, with factories divided into semi-autonomous groups (*kumi*) each guided by a leader (Shimizu 1998: 64-65). Each *kumi* would variously refine factory floor methods to achieve *kaizen* (corporate goal of continuous improvement), and workers' wages were individualised to reflect their skill and efficiency (ibid.). In the Toyotaist model, workers cooperated to produce whole products (rather than mute labour on disaggregated parts). Thus communication entered "directly into the productive process," with the chain of production becoming a "*linguistic chain*" (Marazzi op. cit. 49, emphasis in original). However, in practice this model brought its own pressures on workers, and was eventually restructured in the 1990s to both "humanise" labour and instil a "'delight in producing'" (Shimizu op. cit. 83-85).

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21 Moreover, agriculture is now being informatised, which in turn creates a new cycle of struggles between powerful corporate entities and small farmers and Indigenous groups over issues such as seed patenting and genetically-modified organisms (Hardt & Negri 2004: 112-113). Progressive industrialisation and post-industrialisation has birthed a translocal class of activist peasants and small land holders, who increasingly use ICTs and mediatised spectacles to link their struggles (Yuen, Burton-Rose, & Katsiaficas 2004).

Toyotaism's “gradual diffusion” to Western economies in the 1980s was spurred by similar conditions to those in 1950s Japan, namely a “crisis of production and mass consumption initiated by the 1974-5 recession” followed by the consequences of “neoliberal politics in the 1980s” (Marazzi 1999: 18, my own translation). The “politics of austerity” had partially dismantled the welfare state and reduced real salaries, causing a crisis in Fordism's “cultural” and economic model, and reanimating the struggles of 1968 (ibid., my own translation). From this tension emerged a new “productive paradigm” which amongst other things included the “organisation of work with higher intellectual content” (ibid. 20, my own translation). Significantly, argues Marazzi, technological innovation alone did not drive the West's post-industrial transformation, because the Japanese had developed the enabling technological processes some three decades earlier. Rather, a constellation of specific social, cultural, and political factors determine how and when technology is incorporated and integrated throughout any productive sector or society.[22]

Post-Fordism and the Biopolitical Production of Subjectivity

The paradigmatic form of production today is post-Fordism, and the network is its characteristic organisational form.[23] Labour is increasingly autonomous (that is, self-employed or self-organising), and “communicative-relational” or “*linguistic*” in character (Marazzi 2008: 49, emphasis in original). As work is atomised, the governing social power over the “disseminated productive system” operates in a “less directly

22 Marazzi uses historical precedents from industrial capitalism to support his thesis.

23 Post-Autonomists developed their initial analysis of post-Fordism within the social context of 1970s and 1980s Italy (Marazzi 2008: 41). This transformation of labour emerged from earlier struggles which had produced a national labour force which was “educated,” “mobile,” “hated the work ethic,” and opposed the historical left's “tradition and culture,” according to post-Autonomist linguist Paolo Virno (2004: 98). These rebellious workers, despite appearing “marginal,” were significant “social figures” propelling the “new cycle of capitalistic development” (ibid.). Virno parallels this proto-revolutionary situation with the “dangerous” 18th century British vagabonds who would form part of the first class of factory workers, and the early 20th century unskilled American workers' struggles which prompted the Taylorist and Fordist solutions to labour control. Italian capitalism co-opted collective “modes of behaviour” from the radical conflicts and social unrest of the mid-1970s—exodus from factories, “indifference” to stable employment, and “familiarity with learning and communication networks”—and transformed these behaviours into a “productive resource” (ibid. 99, emphasis in original). This was made possible by the Toyotaist precedent, the deepening integration of ICTs within sites of production, and the shift to outsourcing (Marazzi 2008: 41).

visible and material form," becoming an "*invisible power*" (ibid. 42). The post-Fordist paradigm influences numerous other sectors, replicating the earlier dominance of Taylorism, Fordism, and Toyotaism. The paradigm has not necessarily superseded these earlier forms, but rather has incorporated some of their features.[24]

One key difference in this new "historical tendency" is that it extends beyond traditional sites of production (the factory, the office, the school) into the whole of life. The new capitalist organisation aims to "*fuse* work and worker, to *put to work the entire lives* of workers" (ibid. 50, emphasis in original). The post-Fordist economy requires not only clocked-on embodied hours, but more importantly, people's intellectual, imaginative, linguistic, and creative capacities and aptitudes. Waged labour's traditional delineation between "labour time" and "non-labour time," and "remunerated life and non-remunerated life," becomes blurred for those at the labour market's "high and low ends," as people transfer previously free "blocks of social time" to "relational-communicational time," "learning" and "reflection" (Virno 2004: 103; Hardt & Negri 2004: 145; Marazzi 2008: 41-42). As work time increases to the point of being "work without end," wages continue to drop (Cohen, cited in Marazzi 2008: 41).

Post-Fordist labour is "biopolitical labour," drawing upon life (*bios*) to create "not only material goods," but also "relationships," "social life," and "subjectivity itself" (Hardt & Negri 2004: 109, x).[25] Thus any resistance to the totalising logic of biopolitical production must manifest less in those spatialised and temporalised locations formally associated with work, and more across time and space in the interstices of daily existence. As commodification's stealthy creep monitors and encloses public space and

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24 An example is the Taylorisation of call centres, where workers' communication with customers must adhere to rigid scripts and is closely monitored for 'quality and training purposes'. Factories producing the components for the 'knowledge revolution' which maintains the post-Fordist paradigm are perhaps pre-Fordist, with workers not paid enough to purchase the commodities they assemble.

25 Biopower and biopolitics are concepts borrowed from the French philosopher and social theorist Michel Foucault who in the 1970s analysed the discipline and regulation by government of the social body and the production of subjectivities; his work was further interpreted by the post-structuralists Deleuze and Guattari (Hardt & Negri 2000: 22-30). Being "dissatisfied with Foucault's alleged pessimism," Hardt and Negri (2009: 56-61) and other post-Autonomists offer an alternative interpretation by positing "biopolitics to be the subversive counterpart to biopower" (Generation Online n.d.). See also Virno (2004: 81-84, emphasis in original) on biopolitics and "*labour-power*" or the "*potential* to produce." As Marx notes in the *Grundrisse*, the "use value" that the worker offers the capitalist "does not exist apart from him at all, but only in *potentiality*, as his *capacity*" (cited in Virno 2004: 82, emphasis in original).

private time, the need to reinvent ourselves and our forms of social organisation intensifies.

Each social and labour restructuring opens up possibilities for resistance. Factory-based production produced the “mass worker” fighting to “make capital pay for lives vanishing meaninglessly down the assembly line” by using “interruption and sabotage” to convert the factory into a “bastion of resistance” (Dyer-Witherford: 73-74). Similarly, informatisation creates the technological platforms and social contexts for the production of new political subjectivities.

The struggle is not to change the workplace (which in any case is often our embodied selves), but to reclaim the whole of life, that which capital has expropriated. This struggle over the “control or autonomy of the production of subjectivity” requires people to liberate that which informational capitalism produces—its machines, processes, and accumulated knowledges (ibid.). Once liberated, info-capitalism's commodities can be creatively deployed, although free culture can produce yet another means of exploitation, somebody's manicured hands “in our wallet” as we “produce freely in front of our computers,” notes writer and researcher Matteo Pasquinelli (2010: 298). Rejecting the monetisation of thought and language, and the commodification of our social relationships, struggle does not signify a return to a pre-industrial Eden. Its current course through the processes of informational capitalism is chaotic and unclear, but the renegade armada is in motion even if no land is yet ahoy.

Theoretical Explorations

The General Intellect Untethered

The post-Autonomist impetus is to “walk beyond Marx,” adapting theories and methods to a changed social reality (Hardt & Negri 2004: 140-141). Consideration of the “mass-intellectuality” generated by the technology-assisted diffusion of knowledge throughout society has led to a reconsideration of the “general intellect” (Virno 2001, no page number). When Marx formulated his prescient theory of the general intellect in 1857-58, Europe's popular revolutions had failed, and Britain was automating manufacturing. In his 'Fragment on Machines,' a short section within the *Grundrisse,*[26]

26 The *Grundrisse* comprises seven notebooks Marx drafted in 1857-8, but the manuscript was subsequently lost. When finally published in 1953, it aroused great interest because it illuminated Marx's *Capital*. Marx introduced the general intellect concept in the *Grundrisse* (Marx 1973:7). The *Grundrisse* is the Autonomists' “favourite text,” one which the 1960s and 1970s social movements preferred over *Capital’s* orthodoxy, claims Terranova (2004: 86).

Marx argued that as industrialisation proceeded manual labour would become less necessary to capital accumulation. Surplus value would be derived instead from the accumulated "abstract knowledge" embodied in the machines. Machines are "*organs of the human brain, created by the human hand*; the power of knowledge, objectified" (Marx 1973: 706, emphasis in original). Marx (ibid.) used "general intellect" to signify this body of "general social knowledge."[27]

The prevalence of "automatic system[s] of machinery" within a society indicates the extent to which general intellect "has become a *direct force of production*," and how "*the process of social life itself*" consequently has been "*transformed*" (Marx 1973: 692, 706, emphasis in original). The automaton consists of "numerous mechanical and intellectual organs" with workers "cast merely as its conscious linkages" (ibid. 692). Whereas previously workers animated their tools through their "skill and strength," handling their "organs" with "virtuosity," in the age of automation it is the "virtuoso" machine which "possesses skill and strength" (ibid. 693). Labour is a "conscious organ, scattered among the individual living workers," and "subsumed under the total process of the machinery itself" (ibid.). Yet technological transformation of production opens emancipatory possibilities for a communist form of society, Marx argued.

Marx's concept of materialised, socialised knowledge was exceptional because previously people had considered the intellect as private, to the extent that Aristotle had equated the "life of the thinker" to that of the "stranger" separated from the "political-social community" (Virno 2004: 38). In contrast, Marx highlighted the "exterior, collective, social character" belonging to that intellectual activity which, in an industrial epoch, had become "the true mainspring of the production of wealth" (ibid.). Thus value is socially produced rather than being generated by the "isolated individual outside society" (Marx op. cit. 84).

Production is simultaneously an "abstraction" possessing common elements across sectors and historic epochs, and something specific to a "definite stage of social development" (ibid. 85). Moreover, production is is also a "certain social body, a social subject" (ibid. 86). With capital being "among other things...objectified, past labour," the general intellect in the industrial era entailed knowledges "objectified in fixed capital and embedded in the automated system of machinery" owned and controlled by an elite class (Marx op. cit. 86; Virno 2001, no page numbers). Given that "information, communication, knowledge, and affect" are fundamental to postindustrial production,

27 Although the *Grundrisse* was written in German, Marx employed the English term "general intellect" to emphasise the expression, suggests Virno (2004: 37).

how have post-Autonomists reinterpreted the general intellect and the social subject it creates? (Hardt 1999: 93).

In the post-Fordist era, the general intellect is decoupled from the machines, presenting itself as "living labour" via the *"bodies* of workers," (Marazzi 2008: 44, emphasis in original). Rather than being removed from the social domain to be reprivatised within each individual, the general intellect is now nomadic, using the "reticular organisation of productive/distributive processes" to enter the realm of the common (ibid. 50). Decommodified and distributed, socially-produced knowledge autonomously circulates "independently of fixed capital and legal ownership" (ibid.). This is cause for corporate panic, and hence capital has marshalled its forces pertaining to intellectual property rights, patent, and trademark laws, to (largely unsuccessfully) recapture what it thought it once owned: both the seeds and fruits of social imagination. But the brumbies have long bolted.

These wild horses of the imagination lead us to a problem with the revamped general intellect, which is that the concept is too homogeneous and harmonious compared to the dynamics of human creativity. Information circulating in the info-sphere is one thing, but even the supposedly straightforward encyclopaedic endeavours of the Wikipedia project (itself based on a model of knowledge accumulation from ancient Rome) reveals the probable impossibility of a conflict-free, egalitarian "mass intellectuality" (Virno 2001, no page numbers).[28] Knowledge, invention, and wisdom require chaos, experimentation, risk, conflict, and failure to evolve, qualities which again the uniformity of the post-Autonomist rendering of the general intellect fails to consider. Nevertheless, the concept can be useful, particularly if we interweave it with threads of wild knowledge, disorderly production, and happenstance.

The Conundrum of Immaterial Labour

The concept of immaterial labour is central to post-Autonomist discourse on informational capitalism.[29] The dominant tendency to produce services within an

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28 See software culture theorist Felix Stalder (2010) on Wikipedia, for example.

29 The concept arose out of post-Autonomists' empirical research on the "new forms of the organisation of work" which tracked macro-shifts in the economic domain (Lazzarato 1996, no page numbers). However, I am interested in how it applies to the cultural domain. The post-Autonomist argument is that new ICT-enabled industries producing immaterial products require new labouring subjects, and consequently a so-called cognitariat class evolves. Two related trends are the "feminisation" of work (flexible, precarious, affective), and coerced flows of labour and migration (Hardt & Negri 2009: 131-137). The cognitariat class is heterogeneous and its members have little in common beyond the precarious nature of

informational economy creates “no material and durable good,” Hardt (1999: 94) argues. Hence the hegemonic form of labour is immaterial labour, that which produces an “immaterial good, such as a service, knowledge, or communication” (ibid.).[30] Yet this notion requires further interrogation, as much cognitive labour is captured within material goods. For instance, a digital database can be printed out on paper, a film can be distributed both electronically and as a pressed DVD, an online education syllabus might be accompanied by books and audio resources, and an advertising campaign can manifest in multiple formats from billboards to badges. Moreover, much immaterial labour (apart perhaps from embodied work such as prostitution, psychoanalysis, and personal training) is underpinned by the material labour which has produced the tools for the 'cognitariat'.[31] Clearly we need to further unpack this concept.

Immaterial labour has a dualistic nature producing both the “informational and cultural content of the commodity,” explains post-Autonomist sociologist and social theorist Maurizio Lazzarato (1996, no page numbers). Informational content signifies changes in labour processes in industrial and service companies which increasingly

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employment (see Barbrook's (2010) analysis of labour categories). For example, financial analysts, policy advisors, brand designers, arts workers, software programmers, and call centre operators all deal in data which needs to be analysed, visualised, manipulated, and communicated. Because the sociological category of the “knowledge worker” is contested, it is more useful to concentrate on the actual nature of labour (Terranova 2004: 82).

30 The word immaterial is derived from the Latin *immaterialis,* and the relevant meaning in this context is “not formed of matter; incorporeal.”

31 It is crucial to note Marx's point that labour is “not equivalent” to paid work, a proposition supported by feminist and sociological studies on how women's unpaid labour enables social reproduction (Terranova 2004: 88). The three case studies in my thesis exemplify the rich diversity of labour performed outside of the wage system. Although “free affective and cultural labour” has been crucial to many sectors, risk takers and innovators are frequently un(der)acknowledged and unrewarded in the mainstream economy, however highly valued their reputations and artefacts might be in alternative circuits of exchange (ibid.). While “collective cultural labour” makes products such as film, music, and software possible in the “postmodern cultural economy,” only some instances within each sector are invested in or compensated, and so profits are “disproportionately appropriated” by monopolistic corporations (ibid. 84). A “gift economy” running on free labour powered the communicative and intellectual transactions which created the internet (Barbrook 2005, no page numbers). When capital finally roused itself in the late 1990s to territorialise the info-sphere, a “digital economy” manifesting the signs of an “acceleration of the capitalist logic of production” quickly and chaotically took shape (Terranova op. cit. 89). And despite now being frequently commodified, free labour continues across the info-sphere, as Terranova (ibid. 75-80) demonstrates.

require “skills involving cybernetics and computer control,” whereas cultural content designates activities “not normally recognised as 'work'” such as defining “cultural....standards, fashions, tastes, consumer norms, and...public opinion” (ibid.). Like knowledge, these are semi-intangibles, which, along with “affects, codes, and social relationships,” now outweigh commodities' “material aspects” (Hardt & Negri 2009: 132).

Whereas material production (of objects and food) creates the “*means of social life*,” immaterial production creates “*social life itself*” (Hardt & Negri 2004: 146, emphasis in original). Hence, immaterial labour is “*biopolitical*” as it involves “*production of subjectivity,*” and as it creates “forms of social life” it is a “social, cultural, and political force,” declare Hardt and Negri (ibid. 66, emphasis in original). However, it is debatable whether this assertion holds water for that labour which produces the informational, rather than the culture, content of commodities (see, for instance, conditions experienced by sweatshop workers producing digital equipment, exemplified by Chinese workers making Apple Ipads). As it must be “conducted in common,” immaterial labour takes the “social form of *networks* based on communication, collaboration, and affective relationships,” inventing new “networks of cooperation” through its productive activities (ibid.). Again, this does not apply currently to the vast, geographically-dispersed mass of factory workers who make possible the 'information revolution' for privileged consumer classes world wide.

Nevertheless, biopolitical production via the organisational form of the network is transforming not only other labour forms but also “society as a whole,” thereby making it the latest hegemonic paradigm, assert Hardt and Negri (ibid). This strong claim would benefit from being tested against empirical sociological research along the lines of Manuel Castells's work on network society and communication power (2000, 2009). Until this happens, the concept remains a conundrum. For without being anchored materially in diverse instances (as Workerism was), a sweeping theoretical argument does not build a macro-level perspective on current and emergent lived conditions.

When living labour becomes “fixed capital” all of its inherent “faculties, competences, and knowledges” must be put to work for capital (Hardt & Negri 2009: 132). Ideas, knowledge and skills “accumulated *outside* work,” in tandem with “automated and computerised productive systems,” are the producers of value (ibid. 132-3, emphasis added). Hence, immaterial labour oppresses as it imposes an “authoritarian” discourse that requires a “worker's soul,” and an *obligation* to “express oneself,...speak, communicate, cooperate” (Lazzarato 1996, no page numbers). This new Taylorism is another form of “totalitarian” control demanding that workers

monitor and command themselves (ibid.).[32] Obedience is now internalised, but a dilemma exists for employers.

Although creativity and cooperative production require "autonomy and freedom," employers resist redistributing the power that the "new quality of labour and its organisation imply" (ibid.). This contradiction signals that informational capitalism might create a subject to threaten its own dominance. This subject, particularly as it manifests through "young" and/or "precarious" workers, and "unemployed youth," is not yet "constituted" (ibid.). Rather is an expression of "pure virtuality, a capacity that is as yet undetermined but that already shares all the characteristics of postindustrial productive subjectivity," and is rooted in the history of earlier struggles (ibid.). The State regards these subjects as a danger, Terranova asserts (2004: 83), which is why it insists they must "undergo continuous training," in order to be in a state of readiness as a "postindustrial reserve force," rather than engaging in "experimental, nomadic" lifestyles and creative pursuits (as many did before the welfare state was neoliberally dismantled).

As immaterial labour combines various types of work skill—intellectual, affective,[33] manual, and entrepreneurial—it constitutes itself in forms which are "immediately collective," and possibly "exists only in the form of networks and flows" (Lazzarato

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32 The language of post-Autonomist discourse frequently reflects the social context of the Italian labour struggles of Workerism and Autonomism, which does not translate seamlessly to other social contexts.

33 Affective labour is a significant form of immaterial labour, constituted by practices which produce collective subjectivities, "sociality," communities, and eventually "society itself" (Hardt 1999: 89). Exemplary forms of affective labour such as caring and kin work have long operated inside capitalism, enabling its reproduction. As waged labour became normalised, affective labour continued, although typically unacknowledged. Affective labour is deeply embedded within an integrated, globalised informational economy, sitting at the "very pinnacle of the hierarchy of labouring forms" within capitalism, contends Hardt (ibid. 90). A "form-of-life" is being created in the "networks of affective labour" (ibid. 98). Precisely because it is "one of strongest links in the chain of capitalist postmodernisation," affective labour holds "enormous potential" for "subversion and autonomous constitution" within "anticapitalist projects" (ibid. 97, 90). Through its production of "social networks, forms of community, [and] biopower," affective labour is generating constitutive collective identities and projects (ibid. 96). Again, this theoretical argument is weakened by idealism and lack of material examples. The individualised experiences of (often casualised, disaggregated, and often immigrant) metropolitan workers in aged care, disability services, cleaning, and so forth, do not suggest that a radical network-based collective social form is arising at all. One could argue equally that affective labour enables capital's expansion.

1996, no page numbers). The figure of the self-employed metropolitan worker, whether they be an intellectual or affective "proletarian," whose working conditions are characterised by "precariousness, hyperexploitation, mobility," is emblematic of a growing trend (ibid.). A "basin of immaterial labour" comprised of "small and sometimes very small 'productive units' (often consisting of one individual)" operates in "society at large," activating workers as required for specific projects (ibid.). When completed, the productive cycle "dissolves back into the networks and flows that make possible the reproduction and enrichment of its productive capacities" (ibid.).[34]

The internet illuminates networks of immaterial labour as they manifest via websites, mailing lists, and social media platforms, and aggregates them into a "collective entity" (Terranova 2004: 84). However, if such an entity indeed exists it is not likely to be unified, but rather messily plural, spontaneous, and promiscuous. Capital strives to capture and monetise productive desires and actions, thus retaining "control" over the "unfolding...virtualities" and "process of valorisation" (ibid.). The digital domain's "abundant" production is not totally commodified, but even those things belonging to 'free culture' exist not in a "postindustrial utopia" but rather in "full, mutually constituting interaction" with advanced capitalism (ibid.). The question is, as capital struggles to exploit creativity and sociality to further its own goals, how can those inside of a globalised capitalist system cooperate with one another to advance an entirely different set of goals? Our task as researchers is to "grasp the direction of the present, to read which seeds will grow," and to understand the new paradigm's radical potential (Hardt & Negri 2004: 141).

New Paradigms: the Network, the Internet, and the Production of the Common

Each major historical period is characterised by one or more forms that shape "social reality and thought," and today the network is that "*isomorphism*" (Hardt & Negri 2004: 142, emphasis in original). Whereas the scalar shift to industrialisation demanded top-down hierarchies of power, control, and communication (the pyramid), post-industrialisation requires a horizontal form to maximise communication and cooperation within and across sectors (the network). A transnational class have built dense, interconnected networks of production and consumption to put collective social knowledge to work, using the network form to dominate the lives of those remaining "bound to the world of locality" (Castells, quoted in Terranova 2004: 43).

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34 As an artist who relies on freelance research, editorial work, and the odd commission, this depiction resonates with my own embodied experiences of precarious intellectual labour.

Power at a meta-level has decentralised, due to unprecedented changes in the relationship between sovereign states and multinational corporations, the changing role of supra-national bodies such as the International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organisation, technological advances, and the evolution of decentralised forms of resistance (Hardt & Negri, 2000, 2004; Marazzi 2008). These tectonic shifts constitute a historic passage from imperialism to "Empire," in which no one nation or non-national force dominates the world stage (Hardt & Negri 2000).

Empire signifies "the world system of the nonsubject, the non-State, the non place, a headless system," and emerges from a historical period of "momentous transformations" (Marazzi 2008: 86; Lotringer 2004: 13). Traditional political parties and nation states are mere subsidiaries, having relinquished sovereignty to an "'acephalous supranational order'" comprising "transnational corporations, trans-political organisations and advanced capitalist nations led by...the United States" (Lotringer 2004: 13-14). Conflating globalisation and Empire, Marazzi (2008: 89) describes the "'putting to work' of the *life* of the work force" in a hierarchical, segmented "global factory" continually incorporating new sites of exploitation.

Globalisation advances by "multiplying and structuring interconnections through networks," with communications networks being "effect and cause, product and producer" of the "new world order" (Hardt & Negri 2000: 32-33). Although power might be "distributed variably, unevenly, and indefinitely" across individual network nodes, it is more spatialised and polycentred because of the deep integration processes which globalisation entails (Hardt & Negri 2004: 54-55). As these opaque mechanisms of power become increasingly unaccountable, localised struggles against localised power take a global turn by creating an "enormous open network" (ibid. 288). People "linked together in a network structure" have united their issues, becoming a chorus speaking "in common against the global system (ibid.).[35]

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35 The radical art group Critical Art Ensemble (1994) foresaw these tendencies in their seminal book *The Electronic Disturbance*, proposing that cultural activists could exploit this situation. Both the location of power, and therefore "the site of resistance," manifest in a borderless "ambiguous" zone, transiting between "nomadic dynamics and sedentary structures" (Critical Art Ensemble 1994: 11). Political and cultural activists can exploit this "awkward situation" favouring the "nomadic elite" (an "aggregate" of those sharing "political and economic interests") to "produce disturbances" (ibid. 12, 17). Traditional counter strategies of "subversion" must be abandoned, as they assume that oppressive forces are "stable," identifiable and readily co-opted. Instead activists should continue the "gamble" initiated in earlier times (by de Sade, Duchamp, the Dadaists, and others) by adopting strategies of disturbance entwining the "cynical and the utopian," thereby re-injecting "the dream of autonomy with the amphetamine of hope" (ibid. 12-14).

Yet however insistently post-Autonomists equate structural horizontalism and network dynamics with a (potential) redistribution of power more empirical evidence is needed, as Castells (2009) and others make the alternative case that the network form can deepen the hold of old power. For instance, “multimedia, mass communication” networks generate and program further networks to realise their goals of maximising profit, exerting political influence, and capturing audiences to further increase financial, cultural, and political power (ibid. 420). From a macro perspective, the entirety of the “political system” rests upon “networked power distributed at different levels of the relationship between state and society,” claims Castells (ibid.).

Perhaps another way of assessing the social impact of the reticular form is to consider that it could produce multiple sets of circumstances and potentialities. If so, the world's inhabitants across all geopolitical sectors and developmental stages could inhabit a state of 'inbetweenness', in between the logics of global capitalism and an emergent chaotic non-system of counterpower or antipower. As the fields of communications and cultural production are vital to informational capitalism, they can usefully provide examples to test this proposition.

The network form generates class recomposition, post-Autonomist theory suggests (Hardt & Negri 2004: 79-91, Terranova 2004: 153-157). The structure of the generalised network offers the “model” for democratic organisation that “corresponds to the dominant forms of economic and social production” whilst being “the most powerful weapon” against them (Hardt & Negri 2004: 88). Electronic networks create new possibilities for social traction. Internet-based electronic sit-ins, anonymous web postings of whistle-blower stories, and coordination of counter-globalisation events via email lists are just three examples, and it is no coincidence that all three are animated by the internet.

The internet's fundamental design supports flows of both power and counterpower. Its topology, that is, its conceptual, technical, and material architecture, reveals the “dynamics...of a global network culture,” as from the outset its creators shaped it as a “*network of networks*, or an internetwork” (Terranova 2004: 41, emphasis in original). The internet's evolution has relied on “access to common code” and ICT resources, plus being able to engage with others in “unrestricted networks” (Hardt & Negri 2009: *x*). ARPANET, the internet's predecessor, was designed as a 'promiscuous' network enabling different types of computers and operating systems to communicate with each other via common open technical standards and protocols.[36] Although North American Cold

36 Parallel conceptual developments in the United States and England in the mid-1960s prefigured the internet's subsequent materialisation: Paul Baran envisaging a “bombproof” computer-enabled distributed network, and Donald Davies imagining an efficient

War concerns had propelled early research on a distributed computer network, ARPANET was developed within, and culturally influenced by, the sphere of academia, and energised by the "political dreams" of 1960s "American counter-culture" (Pasquinelli 2010: 288).[37]

Similarly, the development of the World Wide Web (WWW), the hypertextual, graphical platform which popularised and globalised internet usage, was developed by Tim Berners-Lee within the publicly-funded international research institute CERN (Conseil Européenne pour la Recherche Nucléaire). The impetus was to solve the problem of how researchers could use the internet to share knowledge encapsulated in different formats (Gillies & Cailliau 2000).[38]

In both instances, because people inhabiting "the academic gift economy" had produced these projects, everyone expected that research outcomes would be shared for the social good (Barbrook 2005, no page numbers). Hence, the "free exchange of information" has been "embedded" within the "technologies and social mores" of the electronic domain since its inception, with the internet's founders aiming to "eliminate

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communications solution allowing heterogeneous computers within the one system to talk with each other by sending "packets" of information (Gillies & Cailliau 2000: 5-6). In 1962 the United States' Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) dedicated a small budget line to blue-sky research in computing. ARPA's Information Processing techniques Office (IPTO) was first headed by the visionary J. C. R. Licklider, who presciently named his team "Intergalactic Computer Network," and, through a series of memos, conceptually paved the way for computer networking (ibid. 14-15). Eventually, after much work on network architecture, hardware (small routing computers called Interface Message Processors or IMPs) and inter-computer communication protocols, the ground-breaking proto-internet, ARPANET, was launched in 1969. In 1972 it became public, but it took another eleven years until the 1 January 1983 launch of the "Internet as we now know it," that is, heterogeneous small computers communicating with each other using the TCP/IP protocol (ibid. 44). The military part of this network was hived off into MILNET, and the civilian part renamed ARPA Internet. When the ARPA Internet was "decommissioned" in early 1990 three million hosts (nodes) already existed on the network; by 1996 there were thirteen million.

37 ARPANET's first nodal host was located at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), and subsequent sister nodes placed at the Stanford Research Institute, University of California at Santa Barbara, and the University of Utah. However, deep interconnections exist between the United States military and educational institutions, which gives those countercultural dreams an added twist. In 1972 ARPA became DARPA, with the D standing for Defense, although this did not alter the ARPANET project (ibid. 42).

38 The WWW project launched its public server in late 1990, with the Mosaic graphical browser software popularising web usage in 1993 (ibid. 202, 236).

all barriers to the distribution of scientific research" (ibid.).[39]

The sustained co-operative labour of mathematicians, computer scientists, corporate-based researchers, and educators shaped an entity which in technical terms far exceeded early expectations, and in political terms held the potential to activate profound social transformation. Electronic communities and social networks proliferated, and over time also encompassed the global South and industrialising Periphery. It became (theoretically) easier to distribute unfettered knowledge and ideas, and even in repressive regimes censorship workarounds exist. Internet users are no longer members of an elite (Western male) scientist/hacker class, but include ordinary inhabitants of developmentally-differentiated societies.

For the first time in history the convergence of labour and machines for thinking is enabling a transglobal "intellectuality of the masses," declare post-Autonomists (Virno 2004: 107). However, this optimistic assertion assumes not only that the "masses" are online (which masses? Not all of those in the global South surely), but also are engaging in discursive activities of a more thoughtful and analytical nature than those found on tweets, talk-back radio, or Letters to the Editor. Network culture has become a mass culture that is a "highly differentiated, multi-scaled," heterogeneous, micro-segmented phenomenon, "animated" by cultural, affective, and technical labour, says Terranova (2004: 72, 74). Again, this declaration is problematic, reflecting the Eurocentrism of post-Autonomist thought. Nevertheless, network culture does offer new contexts for the production of the common, which potentially can scale upwards and outwards, creating critical mass if not a critical mass culture.

Contemporary notions of the common applied to the digital domain have been informed by debates within free software and open technical standards communities, intellectual property rights discourses, and also by broader struggles over the commodification of natural resources including seeds and water.[40] Waves of expropriation exploit those linguistic and communicative commodities produced by

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39 As knowledge is socially constructed, it evolves by being freely shared. Institutional turf wars, national rivalries, and political tensions occurred throughout both the internet's and Web's development, as Gillies and Cailliau's (2000) history details, yet these massive projects were still made manifest. The evolution of the UNIX operating system and the normalisation of the practice of sharing source code is another example (Kelty 2008: 119-142). Given the current extreme commodification of knowledge as evidenced by the burgeoning intellectual property industry, the litigious field of software patents, and the corporatisation of education, could comparable large-scale, intellectually unrestricted projects happen today?

40 Neoliberal ideology, policies and practices advance massive expropriation of material resources, from minerals to forests to water (Barlow 2002; Hardt & Negri 2009: 137-139).

biopolitical labour. This “second form” of the common (as opposed to the first form of a spatially-embedded common with its natural resources) “blurs the division between nature and culture” (Hardt & Negri 2009: 139).[41] Transdisciplinary discourses around “knowledge society,” “knowledge commons,” “digital commons,” and “electronic commons” are populated by social software developers, hardware hackers, scientists, engineers, cultural theorists, intellectual property lawyers, artists, and activists (Boyle 1996; Oram 2001; Berry 2008; Kelty 2008). The corporate world retaliates to the myriad expressions of “free culture” by attempting to enclose knowledges and cultural expressions using legal mechanisms (digital rights management) technical solutions (hardware controls), and monetisation (user-pays subscriptions) (Boyle 1996; Lessig 2004; Torsson & Fleischer 2005; Berry 2008; Hardt & Negri 2009).[42]

Even network-loving “*freeculturalism*” falls into the trap of commodification through its uncritical adoption of the digital enclosures' funky face, Creative Commons licensing systems designed to “lubricate the space of the market,” argues Pasquinelli (2010: 289, emphasis in original). He points to Dmytri Kleiner's (2010) notional “Copyfarleft” hybrid license with its inbuilt recognition of “class divide” as a better way to build an “autonomous commons” (ibid.).

The solution to privatisation of the common does not lie within a return to the public domain, as this would maintain state control “as if the common were irrelevant or extinct” (Hardt & Negri 2009: *viii*). Such a scenario mirrors the false choice between state socialism and capitalism, argue Hardt and Negri (ibid. ix), as both are “regimes of property that exclude the common.” Rather, the political project is to “win back and

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41 The European medieval commons provided natural resources in the form of earth, water, and plants for life to reproduce itself. Its expropriation through legally-sanctioned land grabs (domestic and colonial) was a foundation stone of modern capitalism. As the material resources of the commons were sequestered and enclosed, the social knowledge which expropriated them from a “patrimony of empirical knowledge” about herbal healing, and paved the way for a new and gendered “form of enclosure,” professional medicine (Federici 2004: 201). Marx conceived the initial stages of wealth accumulation (“primitive accumulation”) in pre-capitalist societies as requiring the “direct expropriation of human, social, and natural wealth,” whereas contemporary Marxist scholars argue that capitalism requires not a “linear progression through historical stages but rather a “constant back-and-forth movement” between primitive accumulation and capitalist production” (Hardt & Negri 2009: 138).

42 Some specific examples include selling user preferences to advertisers (Facebook), embedding output in proprietary online viewers (YouTube), hardwiring Digital Rights Management (DRM) into material devices (iPhone), and monetising previously gratis tools and platforms after building a dependent user base (Ning).

expand the common and its powers," a contemporary recuperation of historical struggles that could force open a "new space for politics" (ibid.). A multiplicity of grassroots-driven projects across a range of fields, from the environment to education are deeply engaged in doing just this. One unambiguous sign of this locally differentiated, globally emergent phenomenon of creating a new space for politics can be seen in the increasing tendency to interconnect struggles over the common (see for example, Notes from Nowhere 2003, and 'The Edu-factory Archives' 2010).

The common, both as an abstracted ideal and as a massive constellation of actual instances, is a critical field of ongoing struggle. The informational and cultural commons are constituted by cooperative social praxes which can support the new struggles. These praxes of the common interweave active and reactive currents: decommodification of ideas and information by technical and cultural means, creation of the new through various means including 'remix', and reterritorialisation and expansion of the info-sphere through development of exchange circuits supported by legal and technical mechanisms (Oram 2001; Lessig 2004; Berry 2008).[43]

There is a danger that the focus on political struggle can occlude creativity for its own sake, as an expression of our humanness. A "grey commons" extends possibilities for our "conditions of living," say activist coders Palle Torsson and Rasmus Fleischer (2005, no page numbers). Every day pleasure-seeking "creators, amateurs or fans" make the "world appear" through a "chain of small habits" (ibid.). Their uncoordinated, playful, and intuitive actions also constitute steps towards a "democratisation of creativity" (ibid.).

Struggles over the common and the commons on the biopolitical terrain move beyond the refusal of the "republic of property" and its "mechanisms of power" (Hardt & Negri 2009: 15-16). Refusal transformed into resistance creates an "alternative on the immanent plane of social life" (ibid.). Thus the potential new forms of social and political agency are not transcendental to capitalism but are immanent within it. From inside the beast it is possible to build a "democracy of the multitude," Hardt and Negri (ibid. 21) argue.

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43 Legal means include the General Public Licence (GPL) and the Creative Commons licences for software and media respectively. Technical means include hardware hacks such as DeCess that invalidate copy protection on digital recorders, and the construction of 'pirate' radio and television channels.

The Inchoate Multitude

Struggle produces political subjects, and post-Autonomists argue that globalised postindustrialised capitalism has produced a new collective subject, the "multitude" (Hardt & Negri 2004, 2009; Virno 2004). This "new category in political thought" carries an Enlightenment lineage (Lotringer 2004: 13).[44] Its recuperated form arises from the biopolitical field, constituted by cooperative communicative processes. As evidenced by its appearance in numerous discourses, this abstract figure has generated much interest in both philosophical and activist fields. Depicted as a heterogeneous "social composition," it is argued that the multitude will (and does) employ digital networks and ICTs to organise and mobilise itself, periodically gathering bodies and 'disembodies' to disrupt the flows of power and build experimental social forms (Hardt & Negri 2004: 66).

Crucially, the multitude is a "set of singularities" encompassing the deep fragmentation and segmentation within and across contemporary societies in terms of ethnicity, class, gender, culture, politics, and other variables (Hardt & Negri 2009: 112). Founded on "practices of self-determination and the common" the kaleidoscopic multitude is continuously metamorphosing, as "resistance and the collaboration with others" is always "transformative" (ibid.). This utopian construct operates in the theoretical domain as a mythological trickster, fuelled by a rage encapsulated by the Zapatista slogan of Ya Basta! (Enough is enough!). It aims to outwit its nemesis of info-capitalism by its more nimble use of networked intelligence.

As with other post-Autonomist conceptual categories, the multitude suffers from being disconnected to diverse material examples which might support the thesis. Additionally, while presented as a constellation of "singularities" it retains a sense of being unitary and all-inclusive, *the* multitude, rather than allowing the co-existence of many multitudes (or a cluster or plenitude of multitudes). Nevertheless, as I believe that the concept has merit, I will outline some key ideas.

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44 Dutch Jewish philosopher Baruch Spinoza countered the unitary political category of the "people" beholden to the State as advanced by the English Thomas Hobbes, with "*multitudo*," a "plurality" that engages in the public sphere, "in collective action, in the handling of communal affairs, without converging into a One." This is the form of existence "for the many, seen as being many" (Virno 2004: 21-23). The 17th century (relatively privileged) multitude could call upon their "right of resistance" to protect the small (local communities, guilds) from the central power (Virno, cited in Lazzarato, n. d.). See also Hardt & Negri's (2009: 40-44) discussion of the "constitutive relation between multitude and poverty" in England during the same period in which the Levellers advocated for the rights of a plural body of the poor.

This potentially radical class reformation desires “non-representative political forms” and is “open to plural experiences” (Lotringer 2004: 13). Whereas, according to Lotringer (ibid. 15-16, emphasis in original), the multitude that Hardt and Negri imagined in 2000 was “prophetic” and “*a struggle looking for a class*” to carry out “the postmodern revolution against Empire,” Virno's multitude is already among us, charged with “rescuing political action from its current paralysis.” Multitude's political actors are those “mobile and detached, adaptable, curious, opportunistic and cynical...inventive...de-politicised...disobedient” immaterial workers created by post-Fordism, that is, the “current subordinate labour-power” (Lotringer ibid. 17; Virno 2004: 44-45). Yet this is not a political movement per se, but rather an inchoate swirl of tendencies which periodically resemble a semi-organised pluralistic political body.

The “amphibian category” of the contemporary multitude addresses both “social production based on knowledge and language” and also the “crisis of the form-of-State” under Empire (Virno ibid. 44). The post-Fordist multitude is a “mode of being” which hybridises three previously distinct (although intersecting) spheres: “Labor, Action, Intellect” (ibid. 49). In the Western tradition, labour involved the “organic exchange with nature” to produce new objects, the intellect was “solitary and inconspicuous,” and political action was public and “consigned to exteriority” (ibid. 50). Now this “ancient tripartitioning” is collapsing, as boundaries between “pure intellectual activity, political action, and labour” dissolve, and people must think, communicate, and act in concert to produce the craft of life (ibid.). The front line of politics today has moved out of “party headquarters” with its “more wretched” contents, to a non-aligned space in which it is possible to experience “beginning something again...in the presence of others,” imagining the “possible” (ibid. 51).

“Another world is possible!” This slogan has been taken up by antiglobalisation proponents worldwide who have been inspired by the Zapatistas and the demand for “globalisation from below” (Slater 2004: 197-222). For the post-Autonomists this other world takes the form of a “*non-representational democracy*” to be built by the “network of individuals,” the “being-many,” of the multitude (ibid. 79, 51, emphasis in original). Their interest lies not in seizing power to build a new State, but to defend “plural experiences, embryos of non-state public sphere and innovative forms of life” (Virno, cited in Lazzarato n. d., no page numbers).

The multitude is depicted as an emergent phenomenon, which gives it a free pass in terms of speculating too deeply on the nature of the world it is singing into being, and how it can mobilise all those singularities to do the heavy lifting. Some theorists draw upon other fields (such as biological computing, artificial intelligence, neural networks, and complex systems) to theoretically explore the multitude's dynamics, although this does not necessarily help explain exactly *how* transformation will occur (Terranova

2004: 129, 101). Complexity theory advises that emergent behaviour of a collective form, tendency, or movement is linked to the “initial conditions” which enable a specific outcome “to emerge spontaneously” (ibid.104). These conditions for the multitude are transversal, not linear, connections (ibid. 105). The interconnected spheres of culture, media, and communication operate as a “field of intensity” holding a “biopolitical power” to engage imaginations. Thus they are a “site of emergence” for the other “mode of politics” that the “networked multitude” represents (ibid. 150). Here at last is something we can test, by going into particular embodied and emplaced instances within these fields and searching for traces of multitude. And if we discover such traces, we can examine them forensically.

The Four Lines of Analysis Derived from the Theoretical Framework

In this literature review I have used a post-Autonomist perspective to examine how technological advances in the transition from industrialism to postindustrialism have reordered capitalist logic, and possibly precipitated a global social transformation. The main hole in the theory bucket is its lack of diverse real world examples. This highlights the need for empirical research across a global field which encompasses geopolitical and sectoral differentials. If a myriad of alternative microtopian models exist, and they share similar yet differentially-expressed underlying social processes, then the theory can be tested. Perhaps we *are* in the nascent stage of a massive reordering of power driven from below by new collective forms. If so, this reordering is surely not smooth and predictable, but is more like to be chaotic, haphazard and embodying of local differences.

From this literature review I have derived four lines of analysis to apply to each of the case studies. Just as post-Autonomist theory stems from a Marxian tradition grounded in the analysis of material reality, my lines of analysis allow me to describe, compare, abstract, and generalise the cases by examining each project's material circumstances. This provides a solid basis for the subsequent extraction of themes embedded in the cases. The four analytical categories are drivers, process, specificity, and emancipation.

As discussed in the introductory chapter, my three cases—Furtherfield, Hong Kong In-Media, and the Container Project—are dealt with individually in separate chapters. In each instance, I firstly discuss the drivers, that is, the underlying social, political, and cultural circumstances, which propelled the project's inception. Secondly, I examine

the key material and social processes that each project employs to achieve its aims and objectives. Thirdly, I identify those historical, spatial, and cultural elements which are particular to each project's evolution, analysing how the projects are materially and electronically embedded in specific geographical localities, communities, histories, and cultures. Finally, I examine the projects' emancipatory visions, giving examples of how they are collectively enacted and received.

These four lines of analysis speak directly to key claims made by post-Autonomist theory about the changing nature of labour, class, technology, and society. Just as the theoretical concepts are interrelated (immaterial labour, general intellect, multitude), my analytical axes are similarly connected with one another. For example, drivers and specificity illuminate aspects of the process and emancipatory visions. Likewise, process and emancipation can feed back into the originating conditions, transforming the drivers or shifting how a project is emplaced within its local or transglobal context. The analytical frame offers a uniform scaffolding for the particularities of each case in the following three chapters, and enables me to extract common themes to discuss in the thesis's conclusion.

The underlying concept behind my first line of analysis, **drivers**, is related to the Marxian notion of antagonism briefly discussed in the introductory chapter. Each case study project was established by subjects contesting the logic of capital. As all three projects grapple with existence in a globalised world under info-capitalism's domination, similarities exist amongst their driving motivations. Whilst the localised circumstances differ dramatically, the protagonists' lived experiences mark them as belonging to the "basin" of immaterial labour which capital either exploits, discards, or ignores. These creative "loquacious" subjects have had their own experiences of the neoliberal Empire's new clothes, concluding that they must use the same constitutive threads spun by info-capitalism to weave alternative systems of production and exchange within their own sectors of the cultural terrain. Although the projects have started often from a reactive position—rebelling against impoverishment, exclusion, censorship, injustice—they have become proactive in their visions and programs.

My second line of analysis, **process**, builds upon foundations laid by the drivers. We focus on how the projects achieve their social, political, and creative aims by examining the combination of digital platforms and tools which they employ, and the cooperative, communicative processes they foster. Material (built environment), immaterial (electronic), and social architectures are examined. The projects manifest the organisational form of the network, and operate as nodes within an emergent global network culture which coalesces and disperses countervailing tendencies. How the projects express their own network form and interconnect with other networks

reflects the cultural contexts in which they have arisen. Together, these digital platforms, social processes, mixed architectures, and network environments form each project's enabling infrastructures. These infrastructures are incubators of experimentation, nurturing participatory biopolitical production of knowledge, communicative content, and reciprocal social relations rising up from, and returning to, the borderless field of the common.

My third line of analysis focuses on dimensions of the cultural, geo-spatial, philosophical, and political **specificity** of the case studies. Whilst the themes highlighted in my literature review are mainly discussed in abstract terms, the case studies provide us with the opportunity to understand how the dynamics of informational capitalism are culturally embedded, physically emplaced, and socially enacted. If capitalism's macro-structure reveals a differential topology as some research indicates (the opus of Manuel Castells immediately comes to mind), it follows that countervailing projects will be similarly differentiated in terms of their adaptation of techno-social assemblages and processes. Yet both theoretical and popular discourses on information society tend to ignore differences and particularities, making sweeping statements about the effects and dynamics of informationalisation. Continual use of such generalisations obscures the differences in how info-capitalism plays out across spatial divides, professional sectors, and geo-political regions. Likewise, it obscures how countervailing projects individually constitute themselves in an informational terrain. By comparing and contrasting elements of specificity across the projects, we have a stronger basis to draw our own speculative conclusions about the relationship between technology, political agency, and social change.

The fourth and final line of analysis focuses on **emancipation**, that is, the transformative potential of the case study projects, and how they connect with local and larger fields of social change. Post-Autonomist theory shuttles between positions that either posit the new political subject of the multitude as already amongst us, or as being immanent to informational capitalism's evolution. In either case, theorists do not assume that the multitude is inherently socially radical, only that it has the potential to be so because of the cooperative, communicative, collective practices from which it is constituted. While it is impossible to quantify a project's liberatory potential, by returning to their initial drivers, identifying some specific programs which enact their vision, and situating these within a matrix of historical, cultural, and socio-political threads, we at least have some empirical ground for considered speculation.

Without further theoretical ado, it is time to enter the first case study, the citizen journalism project of Hong Kong In-Media.

Chapter Two, Hong Kong In-Media

Researchers navigate river systems by leaping onto those stepping stones which beckon to them. At some point the researcher realises that the path she is taking across the currents of ideas and potentialities is leading somewhere in particular. From the infinite set of possibilities that the river offers, she intuitively takes one course, and with each jump her focus sharpens. Regret for the passages not pursued is balanced by satisfaction in finally understanding where she is heading.

From the river of online citizen media in the south Asian region which lay before me, one specific tributary drew me towards it. *The Film Scene* conference at Hong Kong University in April 2006 provided my initial landing point, with conference speaker Shing Au-Yeung interweaving Hong Kong's video art and media activism histories.[45] The next jump was to Lignan University where academic Kin Chi Lau directed me to Hong Kong In-Media, a then newly-established online citizen journalism project. My third jump took me to a café beneath the Bank of China to meet Oiwan Lam, one of Hong Kong In-Media's founding editors. A year later I met Lam in Sydney when she and fellow In-Media editor and academic Chong-Iam Ip spoke at the 2007 OURMedia conference. My line of inquiry unfolded through these encounters, and Hong Kong In-Media, a grassroots project which moves beyond journalistic reportage to encompass embodied experimental interventions, became this chapter's subject.[46]

Hong Kong In-Media's primary aim is to facilitate “the development of a participatory democratic society,” reflecting a collective desire to radically change the political structure of this quasi-democracy (Lam undated 2, no page number). The constituency is fluid as each contentious issue builds or contracts participation. The project is distinguished by its production of *action media*, in which the subjective and the symbolic are accorded equal value to the objective and the active.

The *drivers*—incorporating local conditions, regional concerns, and geopolitical context—which triggered Hong Kong In-Media's formation are examined first, in the context of media activism and activist media. The repercussions of an annual protest supporting human rights highlighted the need for more independent media. The World

45 Subsequently Shing Au-Yeung sent me his M. Phil dissertation analysing the nexus between alternative cultural production and the evolution of progressive politics in Hong Kong.

46 My primary data includes notes from the 2006 meeting with Oiwan Lam, a text by Lam which I commissioned for *A HandBook for Coding Cultures*, Iam-Chong Ip's 2007 OURMEDIA conference paper by, email dialogue with Lam and Ip between 2006-2010, and English-language commentary by various media activists published on on Hong Kong In-Media, Interlocals, and other online news sites.

Trade Organisation's (WTO) ministerial meeting scheduled to be held in Hong Kong in December 2005, along with the planned gathering of international activists for a concurrent anti-WTO protest, intensified this need. The nascent Hong Kong In-Media coordinated a regional alternative media conference, deepening ties amongst anti-globalisation groups. Soon local reader-writers identified other issues to investigate.

The *social processes and material platforms* which constitute Hong Kong In-Media are the subject of part two of this chapter. Beneath the news site's web interface are social relationships, creative labour, and technical infrastructures. Topical issues and long-standing socio-political visions trigger waves of biopolitical labour, sometimes expressed as “action media.” This praxis interlinks communication and action through processes of collective reflection, tactically framing issues to mobilise public action. Media is democratised as more people participate in its production and circulation. In 2006 media activists investigating a university campus environmental issue inspired others to engage creatively with the subject. The ensuing public debate linked a localised subject to global struggles over the tensions within the simultaneous corporatisation and bureaucratisation of education, and the privatisation of the common.

The theme of *spatial, cultural, and historical specificity* follows next to draw out Hong Kong In-Media's embedded and embodied dimensions. The 1999 Seattle protests had birthed the online Indymedia citizen journalism platform, which in turn propelled other instances of locally anchored, globally aware participatory news media around the world (Bruns 2005: 84-107). How does Hong Kong In-Media reflect its particular geographical, historical, and cultural circumstances? The government's planned demolition of the iconic Star Ferry and Queen's Piers provoked mass opposition to the destruction of collective memories, and the waterfront precinct became the staging ground for escalating cycles of action media. Hong Kong In-Media's coverage reframed the struggle by drawing out underlying issues of urban planning and democratic representation.

The final part of this chapter examines Hong Kong In-Media's *transformative potential and liberatory aims*. The project not only fosters grass roots democracy in Hong Kong and mainland China, but also extends its emancipatory vision beyond the local and the particular as participants build a transglobal context for challenging neoliberalism. Interlocals.net, an In-Media initiative, was developed as an English-language news platform for regional citizen journalists to exchange insights about under-published localised struggles and to build border-crossing solidarity. Recently interlocals.net has transformed itself, uniting regional social struggles by interrogating the meta-level processes of independent media production.

Typically the social applications of new technologies far outreach their inventors' visions. For example, Gutenberg's printing press broke the socially privileged enclosure of sacred texts by getting the Bible into the hands of the people, kick starting vernacular literacy. Before long this new technology was enabling the circulation of socially radical textual material throughout Europe and beyond. Grassroots media of the time—pamphlets and books—identified social inequities and exhorted embodied resistance. New collective identities form when individuals turn their reading, writing, and doing to a common purpose. Digital tools such as those used by Hong Kong In-Media are the latest in a lineage which extends back in time and across cultures.

Part 1, Drivers

Activist Media and Media Activism

> Sharing information is fine, but establishing a dialogue of ideas and ideals is even better.
> —Alfonso Gumucio Dagron, 2006

Contemporary 'alternative', 'autonomous', 'radical' and 'oppositional' media projects continue two hundred years of anarchist and socialist traditions centred on producing media of “political value” (Atton 2002: 2). *Activist media* is self-produced by people working within broad fields or single issue campaigns, from climate justice, fair trade, prisoners' rights, and so forth. In contrast, *media activism* operates within the sphere of media itself, taking media as its subject and developing channels and platform for self-production of independent media, ranging from satellite television to pirate radio to web journalism. Activist media and media activism frequently coalesce in advanced capitalism's highly mediated societies in which issues and their representation are intrinsically interconnected.[47]

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47 For instance, eco-activists might not only produce media on an issue (documentaries, press releases, radio shows), but also develop communication platforms to distribute their media, and these platforms are increasingly networked. An example is EngageMedia (2010a), a web archive created by Australian activist video makers. They built their own free software video-sharing platform, Plumi to make it as easy as possible for people to exchange work made in different formats, contrasting it with “almost all mainstream video sharing sites” which “keep their distribution platform under lock and key” (EngageMedia 2010b). EngageMedia links into Transmission, an international network of “video activists, programmers and web producers” building and using “tools, standards, documentation and social networks” to support “online video distribution for social justice and media democracy” (Lowenthal 2008: 298). See also Transmission network (2010).

An unprecedented consolidation of mass media into the hands of a small number of global operators has occurred over the recent past (Castells 2009). Despite the oligopoly, news media periodically manages to fulfil its traditional role of the Fourth Estate in liberal democracies, providing channels for both investigative journalism and whistle-blowing, particularly in regards to those subjects governments and business prefer to hide from public scrutiny. However, as corporatised media also exists to return shareholder profits, the Fourth Estate's defiant independence is no longer assured.[48] Yet, as the old mass media loses its fangs, new niche media, or individuated alternative mass media, cuts its teeth.

The internet provides platforms for the development and dissemination of both activist media and media activism. Early platforms included Bulletin Board Systems (BBSs), mailing lists, UseNet fora, Internet Relay Chat (IRC), websites, digital archives, and occasionally multi-user domains (MUDs and MOOs). Later platforms expanded to automatic news aggregators and feeds (RSS), phone applications using Voice Over Internet Protocols (VOIP), instant messaging, blogs, and social networking sites. The differentiated deployment of ICTs by activist groups reflects the heterogeneity of social movements themselves, in terms of their philosophies, technical resources, skills, and organisational structures. Groups might experiment with different communication modalities over time.[49] Some use website portals to link to diverse modalities including chat, blogs, and RSS subscriptions (Bruns 2005).

The internet's heterogeneous nature means that audiences for online alternative media will include those who occupy society's middle ground. "Media convergence, interactivity, and the complex ways in which blogs, alternative media, and tactical media work within/against/upon dominant media," creates a mediascape in which these spaces are not "easily distinguishable," problematising the "very conception of 'independent media'," argues media theorist Megan Boler (2008: 29). When definitions of independent media remain open, "local initiatives" can inflect them "according to their own historical and political trajectories," say Ip and Lam (2009: 1). This conceptual openness facilitates "sustainable discussion" about media and local politics, which forges translocal connectivity (ibid.).

The evolution of the notion of "citizens' media" has made a significant contribution

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48 See John Pilger's (1998) account of the decline of the UK's *Daily Mirror,* for example.

49 For instance, see Wright's (2004: 82-84) summary of internal activist debates (within Indymedia, the European Counter Network, and Radio Sherwood) around migration from one platform to another, or the addition of new communicative channels to an existing platform, and the resultant empowering or destabilising consequences for these projects.

to media activism praxis over the past decade. In 2001 Columbian media and communication scholar Clemencia Rodriguez (2004: 17) identified a need to “overcome oppositional frameworks and binary categories traditionally used to theorise alternative media,” coining the term “citizens' media” as a way of capturing its “fluid and complex nature” (see also Rodriguez 2001: 11-17). Her contribution built upon John Downing’s earlier conceptualisation of “radical media” which had provided scholars and activists with a “powerful conceptual 'tool box'” to begin reconfiguring dualistic analyses (Rodriguez 2001: 14). Finding further inspiration in sociologist Manuel Castells’ comparative study methods, Rodriguez (ibid. *xi*) undertook qualitative research on four instances of grassroots electronic media projects differentiated by geographic, historical, cultural, and socio-economic contexts; all initiatives demonstrated “live historical processes that immerse participants in continuous renegotiations of their symbolic environments.”

Two events marking alternative media's “renaissance” had contributed to her conceptualisation of citizens' media (2004: 17). The first was the emergence of the Zapatista National Liberation Army in Mexico in 1994. Using “networked old and new technologies” the Zapatistas combined poetic language with sophisticated political analysis to contextualise the localised indigenous struggles in Chiapas within a global system of neoliberal oppression, and thus mobilise international support. The second important event was the establishment by a loose network of activists and geeks of the first Independent Media Centre (IMC). This self-managed, online open publishing initiative to support the anti-WTO protests in Seattle in 1999 would rapidly seed similar initiatives around the world ('Indymedia: don't hate the media, be the media' 2003; Rodriguez, Kidd, & Stein 2009a). From the outset Indymedia was conceived as a “hub of exchange, dialogue, and articulation to be used by all,” distinguishing it from earlier activist media projects which made information products for “the un-informed majorities” (Rodriguez 2004: 17).

With citizens' media the mode of communication shifts from “centralised broadcast” to “conversation,” with implications for “accessibility, participation, representation and ownership,” says Hu Yong (2009: 14), Professor in Journalism at Beijing University. Likening the old form of media audience to the “'Subject'” enslaved by duty in ancient China, today's audiences are “having their revolt,” redefining themselves as political subjects on their own terms (ibid. 16). Citizens’ media “articulates the metamorphic transformation of alternative media participants...into active citizens,” linking the productive and creative processes animating such media spaces to a broad gamut of social movements striving for new forms of participatory democracy and anarchic social experimentation (Rodriguez 2004: 17). The citizens' media concept accounts for

> the processes of empowerment, conscientisation, and fragmentation of power that result when men, women, and youth gain access to and re-claim their own media. As they use media to re-constitute their own cultural codes to name the world in their own terms, citizens' media participants disrupt power relationships, exercise their own agency, and re-constitute their own lives, futures, and cultures (Rodriguez 2004: 17).

As we will see throughout this thesis, Rodriguez's analyses of emergent practices in participatory media resonates with currents flowing across all three of my case studies. A key objective of Hong Kong In-Media is to nurture a "critical atmosphere for individual and collective social praxis" (Lam undated 2). The Container Project's mervin Jarman describes how the marginalised can engage in a "recodalisation" of themselves and their mediated representations to create empowered subjectivities building their own utopic spaces in place of collective despair and resignation. Furtherfield emphasise that by reclaiming art and creativity from the processes of commodification people can make their own relevant culture, "doing it with others" as a vital step in a broader transformation of the social and political landscape.

The processes of alternative production are at least as important as their content. Alternative media producers might be as committed to their "pre-figurative political roles" as to what they are writing/filming/broadcasting, explains media scholar Chris Atton (2002: 5). Participatory methods transform passive media consumers readers into active "user-produsers" [sic] (Bruns 2005: 316). When people who are "normally excluded from media production" can access the "means for democratic communication" which encourage "participation and reflexivity," social change is already present (ibid. 4). Media activism presents more than a "'symbolic challenge' to elites," it also challenges the "s*ystem of symbolic production,*" by critiquing the "political economy of mass communication" while building "democratic alternatives" (Carroll & Hackett 2006: 99, emphasis in original).

The range and concerns of civil society media shine through in the two volume anthology *Making Our Media: Global Initiatives Toward a Democratic Public Sphere* (Rodriguez, Kidd, & Stein 2009a, 2009b). Although activists might perceive themselves as "autonomous and independent actors," they dwell in "particular political structures and traditions of radicalism" (Ip 2007: 3). Hence, media activism does not arise "out of thin air," but rather it grows out of specific practices of "NGO and social movements, institutional frameworks and political discourses" (ibid.). To this list of progenitors we could add the constellation of media histories and cultures, conservative and oppositional, which exist in any informatised society.

Protest and Press Freedom in Hong Kong

> Wild grass always survives because of its roots, which hold the earth together as one. Grassroots media share a similar character: they are rooted in local, social and political contexts and grow accordingly, spreading and aggregating grassroots voices into a transformative social force....We need to accumulate our resources and form networks and nodes in order to develop a strong independent media movement.
>
> —Iam-Chong Ip & Oiwan Lam, 2009

On 1 July 1997 the handover of Hong Kong was implemented; British rule ceased and the region was returned to governance by mainland China.[50] A new legal identity—the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR)—gave citizens limited democratic and other rights mainland residents did not enjoy. Despite these concessions "formal political participation channels" would remain "only half opened" (Au-Yeung 2006: 23).

For decades Hong Kong residents have been commonly depicted by fellow citizens and sociologists alike as being "apolitical" or only willing to engage in a "polite politics." In her seminal book *Understanding the political culture of Hong Kong: the paradox of activism and depoliticization* Wai-Man Lam (2004) refutes the claims of "political indifference" by analysing riots and campaigns over a thirty year period.[51] Cultural expression assumes a crucial role in "colonial societies like Hong Kong, where the official space that allows citizens to participate is highly constricted," she asserts (ibid. 33). Consequently, "unofficial or alternative means...may become the most important realm of politics for the disenfranchised or partially disfranchised" (ibid.).

Wai-Man Lam's ground-breaking research demonstrated that "political participation and aspirations" were not "extinct," but instead had been "channelled into community organisations and activism, including the arts and culture sector," which contributed to building "civil society" (Au-Yeung 2006: 5-6). Alternative production has kept Hong Kong's democratic movement alive through its maintenance of "a collective unconscious compatible to democratic goals" (ibid. 108). For instance, the w*en she* literary club movement expressed "young people's political aspirations" under the "relatively liberal British colonial regime" (Wai-Man Lam 2004: 33). *Wen she* became progressively politicised with some participants forming the youth movement's "backbone" in the 1960s and 1970s (ibid. 37).

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50 Britain had ruled Hong Kong since 1842, apart from the Japanese occupation during WW2.

51 Wai-Man Lam (2004) supports her argument by meticulously detailing thirteen key mobilisations. These include the 1950s rent control campaign, the 1960s campaign for Chinese as an official language, and the nurses' fight for equal pay in the 1970s.

Hong Kong has periodically enjoyed a diverse media landscape (Lam ibid.; Ah-Yeung 2006; Lai 2007; Ip 2009). Hong Kong's press is "part and parcel of a hybridised city full of contradictions and ambivalence" in which coexist "traditional and western values, and a capitalist economy and an authoritarian bureaucratic rule..." (Lai 2007: 11). In the late 1990s, the city's 6.6 million inhabitants benefited from 50 daily newspapers, over 600 periodicals, four television services, a public broadcaster, and two commercial radio stations. However, the political spectrum was narrowing with a "major shift towards the new regime (pro-communist and pro-establishment), and a cleavage between a pro-Hong Kong and a pro-China political orientation" (ibid.). Given the mass media's contraction of scope and diminishing courage coupled with the Legislative Council's inability to "effectively represent [the] citizens' will," people sought alternative means of political expression (Au-Yeung op. cit. 25).[52]

Each year on July 1, on the anniversary of the 1997 handover, Hong Kong residents participate in the "seven one" protest march (coordinated by the Civil Human Rights Front) to argue for specific rights and freedoms. In 2003 a massive "public eruption of discontent towards the HKSAR regime" occurred, as people protested both the mainland-appointed Chief Executive and proposed controversial national security legislation (Au-Yeung 2006: *vii)*.[53] Historian Ming K. Chang described the event as the "largest ever public expression of anger against the local government" (ibid.). With half a million people "marching under the intense summer heat," the protest's "size, scale and intensity shocked and surprised not only the administration and their pro-Beijing supporters but also the organisers of the protest," Au-Yeung (ibid.) reports. Citizens proved that they cared about democratic principles, mobilising around specific local issues about cultural identity and social freedoms. Their direct action caused the resignation of two government ministers and the withdrawal of the legislation.[54]

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52 The Legislative Council (Legco) is Hong Kong's governing body.

53 Fearing that Hong Kong could become a subversive base against the motherland, Legco had drafted "draconian" laws which would resume colonial era restrictions of press freedom (Lai 2007: 146-8).

54 The Chinese authorities capitulated to prevent the most "serious political crisis since the take-over" from worsening and triggering a similar mainland struggle (Lai op. cit. 146). This protest exposed the mass media's "serious limitations," as the HKSAR and Beijing "allegedly accused the mass media for fanning political dissidents" (ibid.). Following the forced resignations of two radio celebrities whose opinions had supposedly inflamed the protests, rumours circulated about government pressure on local media (Ip 2009: 57). The station Commercial Radio concluded that "more 'positive' and 'rational' messages were needed" (Au-Yeung op. cit. *ix*). This experience supports the conclusions in Chan and So's 2003 study identifying weaknesses in Hong Kong's mass media including the lack of actual political

A wave of online media with a “political consciousness” emerged around the time of the protest (Au-Yeung 2006: *ix*). Online platforms including BBSs and discussion fora were “instrumental mobilisation forces” galvanising numbers at the 2003 protest (Ip 2009: 56). Paradoxically, these oppositional fora were a direct consequence of changes to Hong Kong's expression of info-capitalism. In the late 1990s the government had supported the growth of the ICT sector, but when the local dotcom bubble collapsed in late 2002, companies closed or relocated. A newly-constituted body of skilled unemployed streamed out from the wreckage, setting up “smaller scale forums and web broadcasters” (ibid.). Shifts in the local topography of globalised info-capitalism had recomposed a precarious class, digital natives becoming radicalised.[55]

One year later, over half a million protesters participated in the 2004 “seven one” rally which had been themed 'Striving For Universal Suffrage'. The dispute over the National Security (Legislative Provisions) Bill[56] coupled with the SARS epidemic “triggered the discontent,” coalescing anxiety and anger about the “economic downturn, policy deficiencies, the collapse of real estate market and IT industry” (ibid. 57). The legislation threatened news production by criminalising “activities suspected of 'sedition' and 'subversion'” at a time when space for discussion of civil and global matters in mainstream media was already contracting (ibid.).[57]

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influence and the inability to promote social reforms (ibid. 4.).

55 Ip (2009: 56) sketches the online mediascape during this period:

> Forum hkgolden.com was established as early as 2000. Renowned for its sarcasm, it has evolved to become one of the strategic sites of Internet mobilisation. By 2003, hkday.net and discuss.com.hk had launched. In October..discuss.com.hk switched to employ the content management management system Discuz!3.0 and became an open platform...one of the most visited online forums in Hong Kong.

56 Central to the proposed legislative change were restrictions imposed on the freedom of citizens, civic groups, and political parties (I.-C. Ip, pers. comm. 23 May 2010).

57 Radio had always been highly regulated, television remained a “sub-branch” of government, and print media had become increasingly monopolised since the 1980s (Ip 2009: 50-53). Self-censorship in Hong Kong's commercial media is tied to corporate owners' business interests in mainland China or their political affiliations, a tendency intensified within the print media sector (MacKinnon 2009: 9; Lai 2007: 185). In *Media in Hong Kong: Press freedom and political change, 1967-2005*, Carol Lai (2007: 11, 180-186) notes that the 1990s restructuring of print media, along with the 1997 handover, narrowed the political spectrum, with newspaper proprietors “acting on behalf of the new regime” by curbing press freedom quietly, by spiking “sensitive news stories” or putting them on the “back burner.” When the subject was mainland China, “direct repression from the central Government was not a necessary measure,” because of the “self-censorship” exercised by some reporters and news

The activity generated a “wave of independent media” and “further politicised the online media sphere” (Ip 2009: 56). Some online radio stations sprang up, and the release of the *Shoutcast* open source broadcasting software supported online radio's “rapid development” (ibid. 57).[58] More people used the internet to exchange information and to create “satirical content” criticising the government (ibid.). These combined practices partially “paved the way” for online mobilisation (ibid.).

The Formation of Hong Kong In-Media

Shared “lived experiences” are often overlooked by communications scholars but they play a vital role in the emergence and evolution of citizens' media, argues Rodriguez (2001: 3). Hong Kong In-Media emerged from a period of mass mobilisations and flourishing of online initiatives. In 2004 local intellectuals, students, and civil society activists held a post-“seven one rally” meeting to brainstorm how they could advance a citizens' movement for participatory democracy. This group identified a strong need for a “local movement to develop a critical and communicative public sphere which actively brings in border-crossing perspective” (Lam, undated 2, no page numbers). Hong Kong educators already had been investigating new media's potential for supporting critical pedagogy. Although alternative media channels and activist organisations existed, the field was segmented and factionalised due to ideological and historical tensions.[59]

A focus group coalesced out of the brainstorming event tasked with developing a proposal for a “popular alternative media initiative in the internet” (ibid.). Aware of internet-based media practices elsewhere, they were especially interested in Asian initiatives, including “citizen reporter practice from South Korea, blog culture from Taiwan and social service media from Malaysia” (Ip & Lam 2009: 3).[60] Eventually this

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media post-1997. This “rampant” self-censorship also applied to subjects concerning Taiwan.

58 Stations included Radio 45 at <http://a45radio.com> which, with the establishment of the Civic Party, later became C P Web Radio at <http://cpwebradio.hk>; and Radio 71 at <http://radio71.hk> (Ip 2009: 57).

59 Other net-based platforms existing at the time included <http://hiradio.net> (Ip 2009: 56), and, later, Hong Kong People’s Alliance on Globalization <http://globalnetwork.org.hk>.

60 The ground breaking South Korean venture Ohmynews (<http://ohmynews.com> and <http://english.ohmynews.com>) has been cited previously by Lam as a specific reference. Other influences included Indymedia <http://indymedia.org>, high-calibre intellectual and journalistic traditions fostered by Z communications <http://zmag.org>, analyses of blog culture and grass roots media by Dan Gillmor et al, “movement media” from Korea <http://nodong.net>, and the Chinese internet public sphere Tianya <http://tiana.cn>.

focus group became the editorial team responsible for building Hong Kong In-Media (then known as Hong Kong In-Media Web).

In Autumn 2004 the group launched the “semi-open” online news site at **<http://www.inmediahk.net>**. The language of the website is Standard Cantonese.[61] From the outset this online media activism project embedded itself within a larger social and spatial field of activity, positioning itself as a node within an emergent regional network. Hence the vision extended beyond being a “pool of information exchange” to being a facilitator of exchanges amongst “independent media in the East Asia region,” and a “launch pad” for complementary projects and “social mobilisations” (Ip & Lam, 2009: 3; Ip 2007: 7).

The project's formation was a “very localised process” responding to the democratisation movement, Hong Kong-China relations, and specific concerns around freedom of the press (Lam 2006a). Although “freedom of speech” might sound “empty and formalistic,” this subject can be “radicalised into a local independent media movement” (Lam, cited in Hadl 2007). The aim was to transform the “starting point” of local people's “habits and interests” into “something more radical” whereby a broader political perspective on problems could develop (ibid.).

As the group is independent from governmental and statutory authorities, political parties, and commercial forces, the prefix “In” refers both to “independent” and “involved” (Lam, undated 2).[62] The group chose not to become an Indymedia Centre (IMC) because Indymedia's “anti-globalisation” image and “ultra leftist branding” would be “unattractive and unmarketable” to Hong Kong people (ibid.). However, the concepts of “citizen reporter” and “media activist” could be “appropriated ” especially since the “media activism” of Hong Kong In-Media's citizen reporters was popularising the term 'activist' in the mainstream (ibid.).

Democratic media activism is “less likely to constitute a movement in itself than *a nexus between movements*” (Hackett & Carroll 2008: 4, emphasis added). It is a means rather than an end. “Media democratisation” signifies organised collective work to

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61 Hong Kong has been a bilingual Cantonese-English society, although increasing migration from the mainland is shifting contemporary linguistic patterns. Standard Cantonese (or Guangzhou dialect) is the language of government and educational instruction. The written form of Standard Cantonese uses some of the same character set as Standard Mandarin, the official language of mainland China, but also includes unique characters. Rebecca MacKinnon (2009: 11) posits the “fragmentation” of the Chinese language as a possible “obstacle” to cross-border media and social activism in the Chinese-speaking world.

62 “The Chinese name is simply 'Hong Kong Independent Media'” (Hadl op. cit.).

“change media messages, practices, institutions and contexts...in a direction that enhances participation and equality, and helps to enable a social order that nurtures the autonomy and development of all people within it” (ibid. 1).

Hong Kong In-Media's core aim, Lam (undated 2) explains, is “to facilitate the development of a participatory democratic society” in Hong Kong:

> A. by providing a “public sphere” independent from government, political parties and big corporations;
>
> B. by engaging with grassroots, non-governmental organizations, intellectuals, activists and public in the framing of social, political and cultural agenda;
>
> C. by promoting social concern, developing humanistic knowledge and providing diverse information (of the locals, Chinese speaking and the inter-nationals societies) for the formation of a progressive and border-crossing perspectives and a critical atmosphere for individual and collective social praxis;
>
> D. by networking with progressive and self-reflexive intellectuals and activists in the Chinese speaking world.

How did participants actualise these goals? The editorial team's first tasks were to build the web platform, and write articles for publication. In October 2004 the website's first iteration went online, to test responses to the platform and determine who the potential “community members” might be (ibid.). The published reports engaged readers, with around 4,000 daily visitors in 2005. Significantly, 80 per cent returned each week, a ratio comparable to Hong Kong's small and medium-sized newspaper circulation (Ip 2006). The website's rapid adoption and sustained use indicates that it answered the need for multi-perspectival news and commentary.

By December 2006 a dozen people were sharing the editorial and administrative workload. From the hundreds of columnists contributing material, one hundred wrote regularly, presumably attracting their own followers. 3,000 people had registered as users, giving individuals an attributable identity when posting comments to articles. The founding group's decision to exercise “minimum editorial control” popularised the website for both readers and writers (Lam 2006a). Diverse communities which gravitated around, and were constitutive of, Hong Kong In-Media included “bloggers, youths and students, gay & lesbian, cultural activists, progressive Christian,” their participation driven by reports which “touched the heart of their concerns” (ibid.).

Organic affective, social, and communicative processes are messy. Adherence to a unitary political ideology is antithetical to inclusive projects in which intuitive, symbolic, and creative actions are given equal accord to 'rational', 'objective' news gathering and campaign strategies. A few local non-government organisations (NGOs) were "sceptical" because Hong Kong In-Media refused to adopt a clear ideological stance (ibid.). Consequently, a "friendly split" with some NGOs occurred following the website's launch and another "movement website" called *globalnetwork* was formed.[63]

Hong Kong In-Media's holistic approach to citizen journalism liberates media technology from government and corporate control. Users exploit info-capitalism's tools to analyse the mechanisms of capitalism as they play out locally, building alternative systems of informational/cultural production and exchange. The project focuses on the people using the platform and the intra-personal processes which connect them, interpreting "citizen reporter" as meaning "between people / among people" reporter (Lam 2006a).[64] In this regard, the website is an instrument for opening up possibilities of what neo-Marxist sociologist John Holloway (2005: 6) calls "radical otherness." For Holloway (ibid. 4), because "writing/reading is a creative act" it is "inevitably the act of a 'we'," a reminder that communication produces, and is produced by, the common.

The writing cohort, says Lam (ibid.), should be "political, educational, communicative and self-reflective":

> Political in the sense that it is critical towards the political and commercial manipulation of mainstream media practice, towards formalistic democracy. Educational in the sense that we encourage our reporters to go out to the life world of others, ask questions and seek the answer and value by themselves. Communicative in the sense that his or her version of a report has to be opened for debate and constitute the inter-subjective public sphere. Self-reflective in the sense that he / she has to be aware of the power of representation and develop their ethics in interacting with others.[65]

Such exhortations fit into sociologist Kevin McDonald's (2006: 3) discussion about the shape of new social movements, where personal experience (as Touraine frames it) is

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63 Coordinated by Hong Kong People's Alliance on WTO, the last entry on the site's English-language version is dated November 2006. See <http://www.globalnetwork.org.hk>.

64 For Lam (2006a) the term "citizen reporter" itself has become problematic. For example, in the social movement circle of South Korea the term sounds "too liberal," while in Hong Kong it can connote "fashionable consumption" of technological devices.

65 Lam (2006a). I have adjusted some grammar and spelling from Lam's workshop notes.

more important than building institutions of counterpower or creating collective identities which submerge the individual.[66] What new social formations can arise out of the inter-subjective processes amongst Hong Kong In-Media participants? How does self-reflexivity differ when it manifests on the electronic plane as compared with physical spaces? Does the interbraiding of shared embodied and *tele-bodied* experiences prefigure new forms of social agency? Examples drawn from specific campaigns will provide some possible answers.

A meeting of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in Hong Kong spurred the fledgling group to push the potential of online citizen journalism to directly intervene in unfolding political events. This same occasion also propelled regional activist media groups to physically convene to share strategies. The WTO, along with its acronymed cohorts of supra-nationals, spawns resistant networks of counter-power. The osmosis between alternative and mainstream media allows the radical reframing of the underlying issues to reach, and potentially mobilise, far wider audiences.

Coalescing Struggles: The Anti-World Trade Organisation Mobilisation

> The "Subject" are having their revolt. Each citizen has cultivated their own awareness of rights and equality and taken up their responsibility to society, moving away from the hierarchical framework based on..."noble bureaucrats, worthless grassroots." This is an inevitable path from a Subject society to a citizen society.
>
> —Hu Yong, 2009

The World Trade Organisation is the "crown jewel" of the "project of radical economic globalisation," according to activist sociologist Walden Bello (2001, no page number). The "global aristocracy" use the WTO as a forum to express the "antagonisms and contradictions" amongst the nation-states to which they belong, whilst also building a "truly global" form of authority (Hardt & Negri 2004: 171). Along with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB), the WTO has been a powerful agent for, and symbol of, the implementation of numerous government policies, structural adjustment programs, the rise of corporate power and influence, and top level trade agreements.[67] Over the past three decades, reflecting the changing

66 The afore-mentioned friction between Hong Kong In-Media and some local NGOs suggests that the NGOs based themselves on an older, more programmatic model of activism.

67 Immanuel Wallerstein (2004: 122-125) succinctly sketches the relationship of the IMF, WB and later the WTO, and their roles in implementing the neoliberal economic policy referred to as the Washington Consensus. See also (Hardt & Negri 2004: 167-176).

political imperatives Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan (influenced by economist Friedrich von Hayek and the Chicago School) drove during the 1980, the WTO, IMF and WB have shifted ideologically, from developmentalism and paternalistic liberalism to neoliberalism (Harvey 2005; Lilley 2006).

Representatives of these institutions, along with government leaders, high-ranking bureaucrats, and corporate CEOs regularly stage embodied meetings, despite unprecedented opportunities for disembodied tele-conferencing. Although locations change—Quebec, Seattle, Genoa, Doha—host city organisers adapt the architectural template of extreme fortification to their urban spaces. Secrecy surrounds activities inside the barricades, and decisions with devastating consequences pertaining to trade liberalisation, intellectual property, labour, and resources, are revealed post-meetings, as *fait accomplis*. Meetings such as the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos demonstrate that contrary to neoliberal rhetoric about deregulation and the market's invisible hand, the reality is that "*no economic market can exist without political order and regulation*" (Hardt & Negri 2004: 167, emphasis in original).

An emergent 'movement of movements' in the form of a "global web of alternative transnational counterpublics," is challenging neoliberalism's hegemony (Juris 2008: 356).[68] Early free trade campaigns and the Zapatistas' "pioneering use" of the internet revealed the socially constitutive potential of ICTs (Katsiaficas 2004: 4; Juris 2008: 357-8). The internet is pivotal in facilitating episodic mass mobilisations, in which diverse groups converge to stage "highly confrontational direct actions and counter summit forums against multilateral institutions" (Juris 2008: 356).[69] Activists use digital networks in three main ways: "to organise direct actions, share information and resources, and coordinate activities" (ibid.). Occasionally mobilisations have achieved immediate results; the resounding defeat of the OECD's Multilateral Agreement on Investment at its 1998 meeting in Quebec has been widely attributed to the internet-enabled co-ordination of a multiplicity of oppositional forces (Johnston & Laxer 2003, 39-91).

The Internet's powerful role in global protest is traceable to three elements of its "human context" argues W. L. Bennett (2003: 25-26). Firstly, activists are willing "to

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68 Alternative framings of this phenomenon include "counter-globalisation," "anti-corporate globalisation," "alter-globalisation," and the "global justice movement."

69 Escalating proliferation of meetings demonstrate both neoliberalism's hegemony and its need to continually recreate its own spectacle, which in turn provokes counter-spectacles. See twenty examples of "Crashing the Summits" documented in Part 2 of *Confronting Capitalism: Dispatches from a Global Movemen*t (Yuen, Burton-Rose & Katsiaficas 2004). See also numerous first-hand accounts in Notes from Nowhere's (2003) anthology.

share, merge, and tolerate diverse political identities." Secondly, they perceive that today's "complex problems have escaped the regulatory grasp of governments" and hence they must scale protests "across great reaches of time and space." And thirdly, due to the "permeability" of old and new media, "viral messages" can reach "large publics with identities" open to the "diverse experiences" which global change has produced. The development of "ever more sophisticated and interlinked communication networks" drives and harmonises these changes (ibid.).

A change in collective consciousness is key to progressive social change, and literacy —the ability to decode and communicate how power manifests within society—is at the heart of this process. Paulo Freire (1996), the Brazilian radical teacher, education theorist, liberation theologian, and Marxist whose work has been extremely influential the world over, developed a comprehensive pedagogical praxis around this idea.[70] In info-capitalism's hyper-mediated societies, media literacy is similarly vital. Many social activists adeptly crystallise complex narratives of power to return maximum media impact, producing "highly visible, theatrical images for mass mediated consumption," thereby expanding circulation of alternative social imaginaries and critique from the 'margins' (Juris 2008: 357). Directed at global audiences, these images visualise popular demands for inclusive systems of cultural, agricultural, and industrial production and exchange, enabling citizens of sovereign states to link issues which directly affect them to wider interconnected systems of oppression.[71]

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70 The Freirean "conscientisation" process been described as a "people's movement towards self-determination through engagement in emancipatory and critical praxis" (Kahn & Kellner 2007: 437). Paolo Freire used experimental pedagogical methods within collective learning situations to empower people not only to read but to decode the logic of power within society. "Cutting-edge media technologies" of the time were part of his tool kit (ibid. 435). Critical literacy was a vital first step in individual and collective empowerment, and as people became aware of how the mechanisms of power and control were interconnected, they could strategically collaborate on ways to transform local expressions of oppression. Moreover, critical thinking enables nuanced understandings of the logic of power beyond the local, opening the way to effect social and political change on the greater field of power. I first read Freire along with the work of Ivan Illich (another radical educator) as a seventeen year old teachers' college student, and their ideas affected me deeply. When re-reading these books more recently I found that the impact of their ideas had not diminished.

71 One of the Korean Struggle Mission's main activist co-ordinators, Jeon Sohi, (2006: 356-357), illustrates this trend, referring to the 2005 WTO meeting in Hong Kong: "Once again, workers, peasants and people from all around the world united under a common cause...The success of actions on the streets is evidenced by complaints (from Korean negotiators, in fact) that the media were more focused on the actions on the streets and the demands from

When Hong Kong hosted the Sixth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation in mid-December 2005, a multitude of activists used the internet to co-ordinate a week-long counter-globalisation spectacle ('Resources on the WTO Hong Kong Ministerial' 2005). Ministerial conferences provide political direction for the WTO and are its highest decision-making body.[72] Activists' expectations were high, with one campaign slogan proclaiming that "Hong Kong will be the WTO's Stalingrad!" (Capdevila 2005, no page numbers). An important point to note is that Asian social movement groups were highly active in the protests, with 1500 South Koreans playing a lead mobilising role.[73] Numerous regional independent media journalists also converged in Hong Kong, as the city fortified itself against the anticipated protests and in particular against the actions of "anarchists and Korean groups" (Po 2005).[74]

the people than the actual WTO negotiations, while media reporters confessed that the meetings inside the Conference Centre were literally 'boring'." Hong Kong citizens interviewed by newspapers "commented that the protests taught them about the WTO and what it was doing to everyone around the world."

72 The objective of the high stakes "game" in Hong Kong crystallised the neoliberal agenda, that is "free trade for corporations—not development," despite the misnomer of the "Doha Development Round," says policy analyst Laura Carlsen (2005: 2). The "pillars" of development, "national industrialisation, food sovereignty, social welfare and equity" are discarded in favour of the "guiding principles" of "market access, liberalisation, international commerce and investment, and privatisation" (ibid.). Hong Kong's elite class had much riding on the meeting's success as the WTO's 2003 Cancún meeting had collapsed. The Group of Twenty (G20) states from "systemically important" economies would play a central role, with even Brazil demanding greater trade liberalisation (Taylor 2007: 155-168). However, as unresolvable differences became apparent, expectations were scaled back to avoid public humiliation. See Lee & Wilkinson (2007) for detailed chapters on various agreements under negotiation in 2005. See also James (2006) for a summary of agreements reached, and their implications, at the Hong Kong WTO summit.

73 The prominence of South Korean autonomous movements in the Hong Kong events stems from their own national successes, as their years of work had eventually forced the military dictatorship to hold free elections in 1992 (Katsiaficas 2004: 8). The 'Korean Struggle Mission against Hong Kong WTO Ministerial' was a coalition of peasants, farmers and others specifically formed as part of the ongoing Korean "offshore struggle" movement (Sohi 2006: 356). They targeted the "international institution that brings the rule of transnational capital through the destruction of food sovereignty, privatisation of all public services, mass unemployment and domination of all areas of life by capitalist endeavours," and also protested against specific national Korean policies (ibid.).

74 The WTO meeting had been preceded by militant direct action and protests at Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum in South Korea, and the Hong Kong government blacklisted numerous Korean activists who were also being "demonised" by local media (Lo

Anticipation of the WTO ministerial meeting had re-triggered public discussion about freedom of the press and self-censorship. The popular *Hong Kong Social Movement Film Festival* directly addressed these concerns, with Leung Man To (2005, no page numbers) advising that the "people's voice from the street" would not be heard by WTO delegates because the government had cloistered them in hotels away from the protesters. "Massive propaganda" from police and mass media equated protesters with "violence doers" (ibid.). Predicting that the "voices of the exploited" would be "silenced and demonised" by the WTO, the film festival organisers themed the event "Opposition to the integration of global economy," committing themselves to "raise some noise, to become one of the seedbeds for the dissidents" (ibid.).

How did Hong Kong In-Media position itself as one of these seedbeds? Throughout 2005 editorial collective members had participated in various projects in cooperation with local cultural and educational groups. They capitalised upon the anti-WTO mobilisation's momentum by organising a New Media and Social Transformation conference for independent media groups to "share their experience in using new media for engaging with the society, and...explore potentials for border-crossing cooperation" (Lam undated 1).[75] Participation by activists from the Peoples' Republic of China (PRC) and from the vast Chinese diaspora was essential to construct a democratic sphere for both Hong Kong and the PRC. Online dialogue during the planning phase identified and remedied problems such as gender disparity amongst proposed speakers, and refined conference themes. A temporary dedicated blog enabled discussion and posting of abstracts, and conference announcements were posted on mailing lists and blogs, including the OURMEDIA listserv, whose annual conference would be held in Bangalore immediately after the WTO meeting.[76]

The New Media and Social Transformation event took on a particular dramatic power

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2005; see also Doucette 2005).

75 Hong Kong In-Media, in association with the Master of Cultural Studies program of Lingnan University of Hong Kong, organised the New Media and Social Transformation conference and associated workshops ('New Media and Social Transformation' 2005). The Contemporary Chinese Research Centre and City University of Hong Kong were co-presenters. Partner organisations included Pots magazine (Taiwan), Coolloud net (Taiwan), Hong Kong People's Radio (HK), Chamsaesang (South Korea), Art and Cultural Outreach (HK), MediAct (South Korea), HKblogger.com (HK), Global Independent Media Centre, HKmediaED (HK), and Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HK).

76 OURMedia is a flourishing network of academics and activists involved in communication and social change. Clemencia Rodriguez, John Downing, and Nick Couldry put the initial group together in 2001 (Gumucio Dagron 2006).

as organisers framed it as an “international, grassroot and critical gathering parallel to the elitist and corporate-led WTO MC6” (Hadl 2005, no page numbers). Would “Asia's Chinese-language independent media largely focus inwards on their local communities and politics” or could they “transcend the nation-state and bring together various like-minded Chinese-speaking communities formed around interests or beliefs?” (MacKinnon 2009: 11). Participants in media activism conferences often shine a light on their own organising practices. Although “accounts of concrete experiences are useful” activists must “go further into discussing the principles that guide our work in communication for social change,” asserts Bolivian scholar, development communication specialist, documentary maker, and poet Alfonso Gumucio Dagron (2006, no page numbers). Meta-level analyses are vital if we are to move beyond discourse grounded in the particular to be able to identify shared problems and develop collective solutions.

By establishing common concerns, movements and networks develop, strengthened by continued post-event collaboration. Collaboration is a powerful means to build and “renew networks” and feed into “processes of scalar transformation” (Coleman et al. 2009). The organisational form of the network facilitates “modes of relation that engender collaboration” (ibid.). However, networking is a “spatial practice” which needs people to create spaces—physical and electronic, temporary and permanent, which are “supportive of the networked condition” (ibid. 15). In this instance, the internet mailing lists and the conference provided those vital spaces.

The New Media and Social Transformation conference was held at City University of Hong Kong's multimedia centre between 9 and 10 December 2005, preceding the WTO ministerial meeting of 13 to 18 December. Simultaneous Cantonese/English translation of talks was available, and the optional registration fee of HKD 150 (USD 20) covered a conference kit and translation service. Hence the event was inclusive in terms of location, language, and cost. The conference goals were to:

1) Promote the ideas of independent media, blogger journalism and citizen journalism in Hong Kong so that people can start joining the existing independent media platform or building their own media;

2) Promote the idea of global citizen and border-crossing perspective;

3) Further substantiate the development of independent media in Hong Kong for the development of democratic and open society; and

4) Plan for future collaboration among independent media within Hong Kong, the Asia Region and among international community (Hadl 2005).

Regional activists' embodied experiences of producing alternative online media grounded collective reflection about social change. Panellists from Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, Nepal, South Korea and Taiwan explored four themes: participatory journalism and the independent media movement; global citizens and new media; new media and critical pedagogy; and internet media in Chinese communities ('New Media and Social Transformation' 2005). General topics were complemented by specific analyses. New media's emancipatory potential featured prominently in pre-event publicity: how media form relates to imagination of the boundary and social relations, and how new communicative forms can transform the social-political character of citizens. The image on the Chinese-language program of a highly pixelated bomb evoked the power of the media to catalyse dramatic change.

John Holloway is a philosopher and sociologist whose Autonomist-influenced book *Change the world without taking power* first published in 2002 has provoked interest and inspiration amongst activists and anarchists (and we return to his ideas in Chapter Five). He speaks of a “community of doing, a collective of doers, a flow of doing through time and space” in which “our doings are so intertwined that is is impossible to say where one ends and another begins” (Holloway 2005: 26). Such a “community of doing” formed around this conference. In the run-up to the anti-WTO protests, the need to consolidate alternative media resources and communications intensified, requiring Hong Kong In-Media members to step up their biopolitical production.[77]

Hong Kong In-Media members' voluntary work for the anti-WTO events exemplified the *communicative*, *cooperative,* and *semiotic* labour underpinning informational capitalism. Research-based work included preparing reports on TRIPS, GATT, and the impact of privatisation on the global South. Other work facilitated a citizens' signature campaign demanding that police refrain from excessive force. Networking with regional affiliates occurred, such as supporting a Taiwanese group in their “Stop visiting Hong Kong” campaign. And some work was linguistic, translating articles for an international activist web portal. Much labour produced and disseminated media items.[78] Finally,

77 Lam (2006a) lists a chronology of collective labour undertaken with “very limited resources (no staff, no office, everything voluntary basis)” before, during, and after the WTO event. Whilst the anti-WTO events on the streets were *spectacular,* and the anti-WTO reports on the website were mediated, the semi-invisible work behind the scenes was equally politically productive. It recalls Bruno Latour's (2005) image of industrious ants in his Actor-Network-Theory (ANT).

78 This particular work ranged from critiquing local mainstream media practices, to running a briefing workshop for citizen journalists, to countering mass media depictions of anti-WTO 'riots' by publishing alternative eyewitness accounts. For example, a story about rubber bullets placed in a mainstream magazine disclosed police violence during the protests, and a

some work was self-reflexive, such as initiating evaluation amongst NGOs of the WTO week's events.

This formative time for Hong Kong In-Media provided intellectual incentives and embodied opportunities to confront the big picture of power and anti-power. Local activists reported being deeply affected by their experiences. The face-to-face collaborations with regional counterparts returned practical benefits. More significantly, on an affective level, the physical proximity and determination of the protesters themselves, especially the large Korean contingent, impacted activists and Hong Kong citizens alike, spurring public conversations about cross-border engagement (Au 2006: 128). The arrest of over one thousand protesters ensured that advocacy and practical support for fellow activists continued after the WTO (James 2006).

An anti-WTO evaluation session raised questions around autonomous practice. This had been initiated by Korean participant Li Dae Oup who had queried the lack of an international coordination platform, a role not performed by the protest's official coordinating body, Hong Kong People's Alliance on the WTO (HKPA) (Lam 2006c).[79] Although Hong Kong is a “very internationalised” base for multinational corporations and large NGOs, it hosts no no “international solidarity movement” (Lam 2006c).[80] With no organisation to connect “inter-locals and international-local movement,” social movements are increasingly “self-centred,” and by failing to interrogate the larger dynamics of power and link struggles they disempower themselves and their constituents. For instance, local labourers resent “illegal, imported or overseas cheap labour,” as NGOs have not “articulated the situation in a wider context” (ibid.). This blinkered view is compounded by the lack of “literary writing” and other forms of cultural production whereby people can develop “emotional ties, sympathy and

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detailed report discrediting the actions of the Department of Justice was published.

79 Tied to the Confederation of Trade Unions, the HKPA's reformist agenda saw it “working closely with the police and government officials” (Po 2005). Hence it agreed to demonstration locations far from the convention centre. Fearing “police repression” and reluctant to defy authorities HKPA appointed its own “'marshals'” to keep order (ibid.). International activists' actions provided a stark contrast, such as the Koreans' transgression of police cordons to occupy the ministerial zone (Au 2006: 129). See also HKPA (2005).

80 Cold war politics in the region causes this alienation, Lam (2006c) suggests, as Hong Kong domestic NGOs receive United States and and European funding. Hence Hong Kong itself is a “non-place” in the NGOs' agendas, and many regional NGOs survive for decades “without ordinary people knowing their existence” (ibid.). Two examples demonstrate the disconnect: firstly, the anti-war (Iraq) mobilisation in Taiwan was not mirrored in Hong Kong, and secondly, the lack of discussion about political repression in the Philippines despite Hong Hong's huge population of Filipina domestic workers (ibid.).

appreciation” with one another, suggesting that 'affective,' 'empathic', and 'relational' media can be precursors to mobilising action (ibid.).

Korean protesters had tactically produced Chinese-language materials, choreographed embodied protest gestures emphasising their “shared Confucian heritage,” and demonstrated fearlessness by jumping into the freezing harbour and breaking police barriers (Au 2006: 128-9; James 2006). With a new-found appreciation of the Korean way of expression and culture, many Hong Kong residents now empathised with the peasants' fight, and spontaneously joined the anti-WTO protests. Yet although these peasants had generated an energy which unexpectedly transformed the general anti-WTO protest into one specifically supporting the Korean demonstration on 18 December 2005, for activists a problem remained.

How could activists systematically support translocal struggles? Sentiment alone could not “sustain and transform into substantial local movement resource” (ibid.). Despite the cumulative experiences during the WTO period nourishing the seeds of a “people-to-people alliance,” this “solidarity” risked early dissolution because it was not organised (ibid.; see also Au 2006). Within the generalised field of activism a need exists to combine transient “face-to-face meetings” with an ongoing “research agenda” which attends to both “key signals” from grassroots practice and engages in “critical reflection...across network boundaries,” as collaborators on the cross-activism Winter Camp 09 note (Coleman et al. 2009: 23).

The internet has become a “pure form” in which people are technically linked, “but without connection,” argues Oiwan Lam (2006c). Consequently, many socially-engaged online projects are atomised, dust in the wind” disconnected from larger circuits of struggles (ibid.). Theoretically a search engine can locate these projects, but “we won't search for it, because we have...made no connection” (ibid.). This again raises the need to attend to the spatialised dimensions of networked practices. How can social movements stimulate desire to learn about movements elsewhere, and to “transform such knowledge into local movements?” (ibid.). Building communicative communities is one element of a constitutive process of sharing collective imaginaries and practical strategies. The 2005 anti-WTO events demonstrated the potency of collective action which interwove the embodied/affective with the distributed/discursive.

The anti-WTO mass mobilisations built upon the renewed resistance of the “seven one” protests, and by consolidating solidarity amongst Asian social movements they advanced a “sense of 'joint struggle'” (Sohi 2006: 357-358). The increasing prominence of Asian movements directly resulted from the “shift in geopolitical-economy of neoliberalism” (ibid.). As the WTO itself shifted its power towards “neoliberally oriented developing countries,” many Asian countries were being “absorbed into the neoliberal regime” or becoming “active players in the corporate game” (ibid.).

Consequently, local movements targeted their national governments, activist media circulated localised struggles, and border-crossing media activism made vital interconnections with larger flows of power.

"Doing," states Holloway (2005: 27), is the "material constitution of the 'we', the conscious and unconscious, planned and unplanned, braiding of our lives through time." Through the "social flow" of doings in the form of the biopolitical labour Hong Kong In-Media participants performed, a new 'we' was constituting itself, inhabiting and criss-crossing the electronic and material domain. This heterogeneous 'we' was made up of local inhabitants and regional peers rejecting neoliberalism's creation of inequities which were differentially but consistently applied under both capitalist and authoritarian regimes of power.

By deliberately constructing itself as independent from both the state and also from existing local NGO networks and alternative media projects, Hong Kong In-Media could operate along two qualitatively distinctive lines. Firstly, it was a counter-hegemonic information, education, and organisational hub in response to the elite WTO summit. And secondly, it initiated new agenda-setting interventions into normalised neoliberal practices; these instigations and provocations were framed as "action media." Next I examine Hong Kong In-Media's platform and processes in more detail, with reference to how their praxis of action media played out in an environmental campaign. But first we take a short detour into the recent past of a collective imaginary.

Part 2, Processes and platforms

Beyond Cyberpunk

> Just as Capital's dream of exercising magical, dematerialised control reaches delirious levels...a crisis point is reached: a terminal point both catastrophic and irresponsibly positive. Somewhere on the line the perverts have dropped out of the New World Order, begun to construct their own Virtual Machines, to program systems which may not exist, to jam systems already choked with information, feeding viral sub-routines back into Capital's master programmes, micro-errors in social programming bombarding the system with noise, absurdity, psychosis.
>
> —Stephen Metcalf, 1994

The innovative literary genre of Cyberpunk posited a dystopian near-future in which transnational corporations monitored and controlled resigned, docile populaces.[81]

81 Cyberpunk emerged in the the mid-1980s led by authors such as William Gibson, Pat

Cyberpunk offered new tropes for visualising networked forms of power in the information age, such as the "consensual hallucination" protagonists entered within the informational "matrix" depicted in William Gibson's novel *Neuromancer.* In Cyberpunk's mythological framework renegade agents battled with amorphous embodiments of corporatised power. Yet despite their periodic interruptions of Orwellian societies of control, the anti-heroes remained isolated as opportunistic alliances between disaggregated outposts rarely consolidated into collective regeneration. A self-aware matrix formed by a disobedient multitude did not figure in these tales, and hence this postmodern mythology was disappointingly apolitical, providing few hints of how alternative societies might be constituted out of these relational/technological networks.[82]

Today we inhabit the future which cyberpunk had foretold. The bodies, communications, and lives of inhabitants of technologically advanced societies are surveilled, recorded, organised, and mined by complex techno-social apparatuses of the authoritarian corporate state (O'Harrow 2005). Even those supposedly excluded from advanced capitalism can be subject to these informatised assemblages of power, especially when they disturb the spatial order.[83] Yet these gargantuan edifices are vulnerable to exploitation, attack, and recuperation. In contrast to cyberpunk's singular anti-heroes hacking their way to atomised liberation, protagonists of real contemporary counterpower projects use advanced capitalism's tools to build experimental network forms to support cooperative ways of being in the world.

The silicon chips and optic fibres powering Hong Kong In-Media have evolved from centuries of industrial development. Hong Kong In-Media is an opportunistic parasite situated within the belly of the info-capitalism beast, as do many other digitally-

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Cadigan, and Bruce Sterling. The genre cross-pollinated film, television, video games, visual arts, design, and music. Cultural theorists including Sadie Plant, Arthur and Mary-Louise Kroker, and Mark Dery were influenced by cyberpunk's imaginary. VNS Matrix (an art group which I belonged to) reworked the genre via cyberfeminist and queer perspectives.

82 Oiwan Lam (2006c) develops this theme in 'Connected without connection: beyond the clichés of technology breakthrough and networking', by referencing *The Matrix* (a film based on *Neuromancer*), and its protagonist Neo. "Neo's liberation becomes a myth that drives individual labour force to contribute to the desire machine of the existing social-political system. In the end, it is difficult to distinguish whether Neo is connecting to the bio-energy battery system of Matrix while dreaming his own liberation or he is really free to travel in and out of the machine?"

83 For example, Afghan peasants arriving by boat to Australia and claiming political asylum have been enmeshed in a net of deeply informatised, bureaucratic processes, legal battles, and indefinite incarceration in immigration prisons (da Rimini 2005a; Mitropoulos, n. d.).

enabled counter-hegemonic projects. While the mass media's gaze focuses on the Web 2.0 phenomenon,[84] a host of parasites penetrate the systems and organs of info-capitalism, transforming its body from within.[85]

In terms of its platforms and processes, Hong Kong In-Media is technologically constituted by computers, digital devices, and software enabling cultural production and dissemination. It is socially constituted by its body of communicative users. The total techno-social assemblage hovers in that netherworld between the material and the ethereal, utilising communication protocols and systems transmitted via wireless, optical fibre, copper cables and satellite, and other forms of the magical unseen. It is one more machine on a notional commons, where labour is performed for pleasure, conviction, or prestige, and whose outputs further produce the common.[86]

In this section we examine firstly how Hong Kong In-Media is structured. A discussion of *action media* follows, using the example of a multi-faceted environmental campaign on a university campus. This analysis demonstrates how people interwove the symbolic with the discursive to draw out underlying issues about public participation in urban planning, and the neoliberalisation of tertiary education.

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84 ICT industry figurehead and publisher Tim O'Reilly popularised the term 'Web 2.0', employing it to describe the digital economy's “revitalisation” by those companies such as MySpace, Flickr, and Facebook which “built their business plans on the back of user-generated content” (Jenkins 2008: 179). This content slotted into various “architecture[s] of participation” (ibid.). Video activist Andrew Lowenstein (2008: 300) frames it as that period in internet history when “Capital discovered how easy it was for other people to make your content for you for free.”

85 Occasionally parasites attract the host organism's attention, as happened with Web 2.0 Suicide Machine and Seppukoo, two art projects enabling the info-suicide of peoples' social networking profiles. Facebook responded legally with Cease and Desist letters to both groups. As in most of the material world, our bodies are not our own to kill. See, for example, Les Liens Invisibles (2009) and moddr_ & Fresco Gamba (2009). Such interventionist projects are canaries in the mine, revealing the friction between individual expression and corporate data ownership. Seppukoo's protagonists and media art theorists discussed the unfolding events on Nettime, beginning with Florian Cramer's (2010) posting.

86 The digital commons is not necessarily class-free. Access to an online citizen journalism portal requires people to have either the funds for an ISP connection, use of an internet cafe, or the ability to access free internet. As mervin Jarman has pointed out, libraries and other State-funded 'public' institutions offering free access can still be perceived as “exclusion zones” by marginalised people, and hence they will not cross the threshold.

In-media logistics

Radical alternative media are constituted not only by dimensions of *product* (news content and analysis, aesthetic and textual form, and reprographic choices) but also by *processes* (distributive networks and (anti)copyright permissions, transformed social relations and roles, and transformed communication processes), according to Chris Atton's typology (2002: 27). Social processes "activate and inform the development of the product," echoing post-Autonomist ideas on the cooperative, communicative nature of biopolitical production in general (ibid.). We can consider the "radicality" of individual publications (whether they be a zine, web archive, community television channel, etcetera) in terms of their "multidimensional character" (ibid. 28). Subject matter and its treatment is significant, and can be generated "within a productive context that can be the radical equal of content in the pursuit of social change" (ibid. 18). In the case of zines, for example, the medium "is not just the message to be received, but *a model of participatory cultural production and organisation* to be acted upon" (Stephen Duncombe, cited in Atton, emphasis added). How do these ideas fit with Hong Kong In-Media's organisational form?

Visiting an historic temple in Hong Kong's Tin Hau precinct in 2006, I observed the soot-blackened ceiling festooned with large spiraling cones of burning incense. Subsequently I used this spiral cone image to imagine the progressively expanding form of Hong Kong In-Media. We can envisage the participatory cultural production that constitutes Hong Kong In-Media as having five circular rings of labour processes and social relations which together form a three-dimensional spiral-form whole.

The first ring of Hong Kong In-Media is the core editorial collective of around twelve people. This self-organised *editorial ring* includes NGO workers, academics, students, cultural activists and ex-mainstream journalists, whose diversity encompasses a range of perspectives, skills, and network links. These members share responsibility for the labour that maintains infrastructure, including newsletter production and various organisational and administrative duties. As an external company hosts the website, the editors outsource web coding and database maintenance.

A second *networking ring* consists of around thirty "networking" members who are "culturally active members of civil society" (Lam, undated 2). They promote the website through their own networks, advise on various issues, and give feedback on the site's structure and content. They expand linkages to individuals and communities who could be potential reader-writers. Periodic discussions between the editorial and networking rings generate project ideas.

A third *content ring* comprises citizen reporters who report news and contribute analysis. Between May 2009 and November 2010 the number of registered columnists contributing original material doubled from 400 to 800 (O. Lam, pers. comm. 16 November 2009). This spatially disaggregated body of reader-writers cumulatively generate knowledge production about topical and urgent issues. They also cover the emerging social movements which coalesce around specific campaigns.

A fourth *user ring* comprises the registered members who “participate on the website” via forum commentary, and subscribe to the newsletters (ibid.). This ring has steadily grown from around 1,500 registered users in November 2005 to 7,000 in November 2010. The demographic range of this user ring in Hong Kong In-Media's first year of operation included “high school and university students, local NGO/PO activists, teachers, social workers and bloggers who write in Chinese” (ibid.).

The fifth and largest ring is the *reader ring* of Hong Kong In-media. Readers can browse the website and comment without registering. Readership has grown incrementally from an average of 4,000 daily visitors in Nov 2005, to 6,000 in April 2006, to between 8,000 to 9,000 by November 2010. Around 30-40% of readers log in from Macao, Taiwan, and Overseas Chinese communities, indicating that the issues covered interest a Chinese-speaking diaspora (Ip 2009: 58). Occasional government censorship of the site affects readership statistics, as the so-called Great Firewall of China has periodically blocked mainland China residents' access to In-Media's website.[87] However, the main Chinese search engine accesses the website, and generally Chinese columnists and overseas-based Chinese journalists can bypass censorship attempts by using internet proxies. In November 2010 the daily page view ranged between 10,000 and 15,000 hits. According to Alexa traffic analytics the website's ranking in Hong Kong is now 597, as compared with 2,000 in 2007 (O. Lam, pers. comm. 16 November 2009).

Sponsorship has been another way in which interested people interact with Hong Kong In-Media, and we can visualise this *sponsor ring* as situated outside of the central spiral form. Since December 2005 a few donors have made modest monthly contributions to the website (Lam, undated 2). This financial support assists sustainability, as independent media dealing with “societal and political issues” often have an “antagonistic relationship with government” and are therefore unlikely to receive state support, in contrast to more arts-oriented initiatives (Ip 2009:59).

87 Mainland government censorship periodically affects readership. For example, in 2006 “the daily visitor rate dropped to around 3,500 as we have been banned by the GFW [Great Firewall of China] two months ago...Usually before and after some sensitive period, such as the June 4 memorial” or the “arrest of journalists and human rights activists,” the website would be banned for around a month (Oiwan Lam, pers. comm. 11 Sept 2006).

Open and semi-open collaborative news projects collectively devise particularised operational logistics and editorial policies (Bruns 2005). Registered Hong Kong In-Media contributors receive log-ins and passwords, enabling them to publish articles, comments, and audio-visual media automatically. The site employs a free open content management system, and editorial moderation only occurs if editorial or ethical guidelines have been breached. The language of publication is Standard Cantonese, although English-language comments occasionally appear.

Contributors submit content which is searchable via the tag system. Prior to 2007 content was organised into columns reflecting "eight major concerns" including local social-political and economic issues (local citizen reporting and agenda setting); current news and social debates (engaging with mainstream agenda); culture, arts and cultural politics (including gender and sexuality issues); education and thoughts; border crossing (China-Taiwan-HK, international social movement, peace and human rights issues); media (new media and media critique); environment and green consumption; and individual reflections (Lam, undated 2). A regularly changing focus creates an "alternative frame of reference in understanding current issues" (ibid.). All reports are "opened for debate and constitute the inter-subjective public sphere" (Lam 2006a). The editorial process resembles the policies of many Indymedia sites, as Lam (cited in Hadl 2007) outlines:

> All posts appear on the front page (side bar) and editors can discuss and promote postings to the centre column....if there is opposition, we have an open discussion via the email list. We have transparent criteria for promoting articles: Well written with social significance, good marks from registered users (we have a marking mechanism), and good discussion in the comment areas.

In 2006 Hong Kong In-Media restructured itself, separating the organisation from the website. The organisation was registered as *Hong Kong In-Media*; it has a membership structure and must hold an annual meeting for important decisions (O. Lam, pers. comm. 11 Sept 2006). The website was officially registered as inmediahk.net, with its legal status as a limited company registration designed to "avoid future potential legal disputes, such as libel" (ibid.). The organisation and the website function as "partner and sponsor," with a small private foundation funding shared office space and paid staff to develop off-line campaigns around 'copy left' and other issues of interest (ibid.). Following a major technical crisis in 2008, the Taiwanese independent media group www.coolloud.org.tw donated their content management system to Hong Kong In-Media, evidence of how East Asian media activist solidarity had evolved.

The Action Media Concept

> Action is not done under the full control of consciousness; action should rather be felt as a node, a knot, and a conglomerate of many surprising sets of agencies that have to be slowly disentangled.
>
> —Bruno Latour, 2005

Emerging issues lie at the "heart" of alternative media, "since it is in the nature of activism to respond to social issues as they emerge" (Atton 2002: 12). As media activism creates "information for action" it is essential that this content be produced rapidly, cheaply, and in a way that mobilises people. Each radical media project finds its own ways to tackle issues, tailoring processes and platforms to its context (see the internal logistics of projects discussed in Rodriguez, Kidd, & Stein 2009a, and in Lovink 2009). The praxis of "action media" has been central to Hong Kong In-Media's interpretation of media activism, and members collectively experiment with how they can apply self-reflexive action to social issues. Action media is a "representation and materialisation circle, reconfiguring and redefining the Real," explains Lam (Lam, undated 1). It intertwines iterative discursive and symbolic processes.

Collective reflection on- and off-line by Hong Kong In-Media members immediately after the 2005 anti-WTO protests crystallised the concept of action media. They loosely defined it as "movement action" combined with "media practice" (Lam 2006a). This subjective, experiential form of activism requires the media activist to "jump into the story of his/her own construction," becoming part of the unfolding narrative and its framing (Lam 2007a: 64). Two triggers during the protests had prompted local media activists to enter the anti-WTO narrative. Firstly, the government's encouragement of the riot police's repressive measures against protesters (Po 2005; James 2006), and secondly, the mass media's initial compliance in "echoing" the state's media spin which had framed a specific demonstration as a "riot" (Lam 2006a).[88]

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88 Lam (2006a) describes the events:

> On the night of dec 17, the police department defined the anti-WTO demonstration as riot and announced it in official and commercial radio and TV channels. Moreover, they also sent out SMS message to everyone with a mobile and asked all Hong Kong citizen not to go to Wanchai, nor join the WTO demonstration the next day. However, many local hong kong people were lingering in Wanchai district to see what actually happened. They were confronted with many riot police who were trying the seal the area off. All these people became eye-witnesses and alternative information sources. Besides internet radio and [Hong Kong] In-Media also became very important information sources. From dec 17-20, our daily visitor rate was more than 8000 on average.

The traditional stance of the 'objective' reporter bearing witness can hinder their ability to experience and encapsulate the nuances of power. Moreover, as the news industry has been absorbed into a globalised 'infotainment' industry which in turn has converged with the ICT sector, fewer mainstream journalists exist with the skills and managerial support to fulfil news media's role to be a Fourth Estate. For example, few Western reporters had questioned the “fundamental ideas” on which the WTO battles were being fought in Hong Kong, both “in the Convention Centre and in the streets,” observed African independent journalist Kwasi Gyan-Apenteng (2005). In contrast, local citizen journalists covering the same protests inevitably became caught up in the events, and consequently the divide between participation and reportage, between the subjective and the objective, dissolved. People realised that unless they *represented* the Real, and *reconfigured* it within the context of globalised power, the government, supported by a self-censoring national media, would frame the events to suit their political imperatives.

The intensity of the anti-WTO protests had affected Hong Kong media activists deeply, inspiring them to forge an experimental praxis which required them to do more than merely chronicling events. Soon afterwards an environmental campaign allowed them to test the potential of action media to organise support around that which initially seemed to be a simple issue. However, the iterative nature of action media revealed this issue's place within a larger field of urban and social contestation.

The Campaign to Save the Trees

In March-April 2006 a news leak exposed the Chinese University of Hong Kong's (CUHK) plan to cut a stand of thirty-five significant old trees in order to widen Pond Road.[89] The development plan's most contentious aspect was that CUHK had never publicly announced it. This situation spurred local citizen journalists to deploy action media tactics to both draw attention to the environmental issues and to mobilise resistance.[90]

89 Campaign information comes from my informal interview with Oiwan Lam in April 2006, with further details clarified over email in September 2006 and May 2009.

90 Deforestation and tree felling have long local histories due to Hong Kong's intense urbanisation following World War 2. Environmental consequences include the destruction of avian habitats and food sources (Jim 1998). The campus provides a habitat for over 130 species of local and migratory birds. Moreover, the symbol of CUHK is a Chinese mythological phoenix-like bird, the *feng*, so possibly the doomed trees also held symbolic meanings ('Avifauna and Fauna on CUHK Campus' 2005).

The campus development was linked to broader regional processes around internationalising education, argues Lam (2006b). In China and Hong Kong the desired international status requires development at the "expense of history, culture and environment," and "institutes for knowledge production" are part of such "developmentalist imaginations." Lam (ibid.) supports her argument with three examples: the substandard dormitories to house mainland Chinese students attending Hong Kong University of Science and Technology's "internationalised ghetto"; CUHK's plan to prioritise English (over Cantonese and Mandarin) as the main teaching language; and the planned demolition of more trees and heritage buildings at CUHK's campus to enable construction of four new colleges catering for international students. These are localised instances of the generalised, internationalised processes of the corporatisation and globalisation of the tertiary sector.[91]

Following the original news leak, a citizen reporter conducted interviews with the student union, administration, and the university's development faculty members, publishing an investigative feature on Hong Kong In-Media. Immediately inspired, a coalition of teachers, students, and alumni formed the Tree Protection Action Team, placing themselves as actors in the unfolding campaign narrative.[92] The activists amplified their message's affective impact by using traditional cultural references to frame the issue, painting the campaign's slogan in large characters on the ground by the

91 This problem has birthed a transversal movement which characterises itself as an "anomalous wave," using ICTs to connect struggles and solidarity actions around the world (56a Infoshop 2008). This wave is a "contagion" coalescing a "multiplication of... mobilisations" across the dysfunctional corporate/bureaucratic chimera which tertiary education has become (Occupied Faculties of La Sapienza - University of Rome 2010). It manifests as various forms of embodied resistance (occupations, strikes, marches) which are further mediated via blogs, mailing lists, and other forms of internet presence. The transnational Edu-factory mailing list functions as a dispersed activist community and clearing house for announcements and critique about "Conflicts and Transformations of the University," evidencing the global dimensions of this tendency (see 'The Edufactory Archives' 2010, and The Edu-factory Collective 2010).

92 Hong Kong In-Media members had previously used action media techniques to draw attention to urgent issues, Lam told me. For instance, the centrist government had violently repressed village elections in South China in October 2005. In solidarity with the villagers, Hong Kong In-Media organised a signature campaign supported by 300 academics and public intellectuals. NGO workers, academics, and social activists who learned about the issue from the website organised a protest outside the Chinese government office in Hong Kong. This exemplifies Holloway's interbraided "social flow of doing" running between geographically (and to some extent culturally) distinct spaces and peoples, which is activated by becoming aware of a situation.

trees. The slogan (difficult to translate) signifies “hug the tree as we embrace humanity” (see Figure 1 on page 78). The “classic Chinese expression about being an educated subject” combines words literally meaning “protect the tree” and “stand straight as human,” and the grafitti sparked a kind of internet flash mob (O. Lam, pers. comm. 9 May 2009).

A sustained campaign occurred over the ensuing weeks, incorporating artistic performances and installations, awareness-raising events on campus, petitions, and a signature campaign. Protesters intermixed modalities: online, offline, discursive, and symbolic. For instance, two thousand signatures collected via an online petition were transformed into a site-specific art installation. These signatures were hand-copied onto banners and small yellow ribbons festooned around the trees and fences, each ribbon representing a person whose cloth arms hugged a threatened tree, animating the campaign slogan (see Figure 1).[93] Another protest action was performative. Representatives from three bodies—the CUHK student union; a group of teachers, students and alumni generally concerned about campus development; and the Tree Protection Action Team—carried tree branches to the Campus Development Department. There the bundle of branches symbolising the “dead bodies of trees” were laid out in a funereal gesture (O. Lam, pers. comm. 9 May 2009).

The campaign triggered animated discussion on the Hong Kong In-Media website. From a single page documenting the core issue, numerous linked sub-pages detail the progression of events, with threaded comments providing additional information and reactions.[94] Some articles and photographic evidence covered related contentious projects initiated by the university's development office, such as the construction of a footbridge, and the destruction of the only natural stream on campus. The following redacted English-language comments gleaned from various articles offer a taste of the complex body of knowledge production which this single issue propelled.

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93 Yellow ribbons have been long employed in Hong Kong protests to signify solidarity around many issues including Tienanmen Square, environmental destruction, press censorship, and the treatment of political dissidents.

94 See <http://www.inmediahk.net/public/article?item_id=100866&group_id=16>, accessed 13 Nov 2006.

Figure 1, Tree Protection Campaign installation at CUHK

Figure 1: Ribbons and graffiti in situ in CUHK's threatened trees precinct, April 2006. Photographer: Damian Cheng. Image courtesy Hong Kong In-Media http://www.inmediahk.net/node/101114

What's next?[95]

I really appreciate the campaigns launched by you guys in protecting the trees. I hope that the next action is to oppose Professor Lau's (Vice-Chancellor) proposal of establishing the 5th College. ...if a new college is built on the existing campus, many trees would be cut down to make way for the development. And, building a new college won't improve CU's academic reputation but it would waste the very limited resources on improving CU's research and teaching....Last year there was the 'internationalisation/ English teaching' incident...

Excerpt from a Letter written by the Yale-China Association HK director[96]

...many of us continue to be greatly concerned about the bricking, paving, gauzing, and wiring over of our campus. One cannot drive 50 metres without coming on another boarded off area of "hillside maintenance" which we all know means green space elimination... When are the interests of the campus users protected? Who speaks up for the natural environment in all this "development." How does the policy process reflect these interests?....it is time for a public meeting for interested campus groups on the whole train station, plaza, and Chung Chi Road "development" project—before all the destruction starts again.

What's the Big Deal?[97]

How has the four Chinese characters on the ground affected anybody's daily life? Or how has it 'RUINED' anything?....Do not tell me that any conscious person would choose to cut down the trees instead of to do some little paintings on the floor. Cutting trees is cruelty, but drawing on the ground can be regarded as art, esp. when there is a clear purpose in mind!

Local mainstream media re-reported Hong Kong In-Media's aggregation of campaign news, reflecting the growing tendency of “convergence” and “interactivity” between alternative and mass media (Boler 2008: 29). Such cross-pollination enabled 'subjective,' 'small' voices from the tree campaign to pass through mainstream media's gatekeepers. Much alternative media content derives from “lived, local experience” (Atton 2002: 150). As the CUHK community's experience was shared with those outside the university, the administration had to be seen to resolve the conflict inclusively.[98]

95 A comment posted by 'William' on 11 March 2006 at <http://www.inmediahk.net/node/100558>.

96 Letter extract posted by M. Sheldon on 11 March 2006 at <http://www.inmediahk.net/node/100755>.

97 A comment posted by 'Frostig' on 14 March at <http://www.inmediahk.net/node/101480>.

98 See an English-language detailed account of the university's agreement to “engage in a

The campaign to save the thirty-five trees at CUHK was ultimately victorious, and the university halted the development. Participants agreed that the interwoven action media processes engaging people intellectually and affectively was behind the success because it had placed the fate of the trees within a broader public sphere. In just a few weeks the multidimensional approach had mobilised around two thousand people. Importantly, the issue triggered discussion of other instances of environmental and architectural destruction on campus, with Hong Kong In-Media providing the platform for collective critique. This in turn intensified the affective dimensions of the campaign as people expressed concerns which previously had lacked a public forum. Some citizen journalists went even deeper, formulating political analyses about an increasingly globalised education industry.

Social change occurs by small incremental steps and large revolutionary leaps, with both kinds of movement necessary for sustainable transformation. Collective processes of action media had saved the trees. However, the processes of corporatisation and internationalisation of education[99] which were generating ecological and heritage issues on campus continued unabated apart from some policy window-dressing. A two-thousand strong multitude had won a minor battle but neoliberalism continued its march forward into new informational territories.[100]

Media activists adopt ICTs in a "developmental and progressive" way (Atton 2002:

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dialogue with all the stakeholders of the University community who are concerned with the protection of the campus environment" at <http://www.inmediahk.net/node/101069>.

99 Social theorist Andrew Ross (2010, no page numbers) argues that the global reorganisation of tertiary education is mischaracterised as producing the "corporate university," because the "amassing of administrative ranks" resembles "Washington" much more than "Wall Street."

100 The campaign had prompted a new university policy which pledged "reasonable and practicable measures to avoid felling, damaging or risking the survival of any tree of conservation value..." would be taken. The university's collation of environmental guidelines and policies, *Green Campus* (2006), now includes specific tree preservation guidelines, and a regularly updated "habitat map" documenting the "distribution of trees of conservation value." By November 2006 CUHK was promoting its sustainable design approach, extolling the "warm and green collegiate environment" and highlighting its "comprehensive policy on tree preservation" ('A Warm and Green Collegiate Environment: New Colleges to Be Sited Centrally on Campus' 2006). However, a follow-up discussion with Lam (pers. comm. 9 May 2009) revealed that controversial campus development continues but now is masked by the administration's use of greenwashing and public relations tactics. The university had taken the fight to the informational sphere, just as the activists had done. Consequently, subsequent anti-development campaigns had been less successful despite the new environmental policies, indicating that citizens' media must constantly reinvent its tactics.

133). ICTs offer “an additive set of processes that supplement and exponentially increase opportunities for sociality, community, mobilisation, knowledge construction and direct political action” (ibid.). The experience of the tree campaign confirms this progressive pattern. The initial reporter's investigative journalistic work was conducted in a traditional manner by interviewing key people involved with the issue. The article was subsequently published online at Hong Kong In-Media, and provided an empirically-sound foundation on which members of the various 'rings' of Hong Kong In-Media could increase their awareness of the issue and cooperatively build symbolic and political interventions. Participants' discursive labour via discussion lists, reportage, and letter-writing was complemented by the symbolic and affective labour performed *in situ* on campus. Thousands of signatures collected online were transformed by hand into visual props, becoming mediatised through the manual labour of a small action group. An *open circuit* of cooperatively-generated action and reflection harnessed and interwove online and offline forms of communication.

We next analyse Hong Kong In-Media's role in a significant urban development campaign in which the threatened demolition of two ferry piers triggered sustained waves of opposition. When the heterogeneous inhabitants of a metropolis collectively challenge the privatisation of space, they form new constitutive identities. These identities are embedded in the geopolitical histories of the places which have given rise to them, while also emplaced in larger global currents of power and antipower.

Part Three, Spatial, Cultural, and Historical Specificity

The Politics of Space: Gentrification and Neoliberalism

> The accumulation of capital has always been a profoundly geographical affair. Without the possibilities inherent in geographical expansion, spatial reorganisation, and uneven geographical development, capitalism would long ago have ceased to function as a political-economic system.
>
> —David Harvey, 2000

If online citizen journalism has become an international phenomenon, how is it differentially spatialised, and how does it in turn produce locality? Media activism does not exist as an “ideal type” borrowed from the West which is then “applied to different contexts,” argues Ip (2007: 3). Rather each instance embodies its own distinctive “connection[s] and disconnection[s] with the civil society, mainstream politics and media industry” (ibid.). In which ways is Hong Kong In-Media specific to its era, geo-spatial location, cultural history, and political context? Does a Hong Kong-based media

activism project exhibit qualities which directly relate to the territory's British colonial and/or Chinese histories, changing population demographics, power dynamics, cultural traditions, and mediascape?

In 2006-2007 the Star Ferry and Queen's Piers campaigns brought to light long-running but little acknowledged tensions surrounding public ownership of the city.[101] The mix of protest actions revealed spatial, political, and cultural differentiations which are constitutive of the 'real' Hong Kong, and also exist in a collective popular imagination. As we have seen, the politicisation of Hong Kong life had been intensifying in a series of waves which the “seven one” protests brought to a head each year. The landmark piers' narrative demonstrates how the co-operative communicative processes enabled by the Hong Kong In-Media platform broadened popular engagement with the issue as its reportage flowed through into mainstream media channels. As diverse voices and deepening analysis entered the debate, and physical bodies transformed the historically-charged site into sites of mediatised spectacles, the issue telescoped out from one of architectural heritage and preservation to encompass broader debates around gentrification and privatisation of that which has been held in common: land, sea, views, and material histories.

Our discussion begins by outlining how systematic changes to urban environments post-WW2 connect with the ideological and political project of neoliberalism. Next we discuss how gentrification manifests in Hong Kong via processes of commercialised urbanisation. This grounds the subsequent discussion about why development processes can trigger such strong popular resistance.

Gentrification is a “frontier” in the “urban wilderness produced by the cyclical movement of capital” on which “fortunes are made,” declares Neil Smith (1986: 34). The now-common word 'gentrification' was coined in 1964 by Marxist European emigré Ruth Glass, a “pioneer” of urban sociology who developed the concept to analyse the “distinct processes of urban change that were beginning to affect inner London” (Lees, Slater & Wyly 2008: 4).[102] Glass's original theory (now referred to as “classical

101 The main sources for this chapter sub-section are drawn from English-language analyses by Chong-Iam Ip and Oiwan Lam. Ip (2007) provided me with his unpublished paper entitled 'Beyond Civil Society: A case study of media activism and historical preservation movement in Hong Kong' which he presented at *OURMedia-NUESTROSMedios VI International Conference*, in Sydney in April 2007. Lam (2007a) presented the piers' case in her chapter 'What is that Star? Media cultural action in the claiming of space', explicating action media theory by linking it to this campaign.

102 Lees, Slater and Wyly (2008: 5) point out that although gentrification pre-dated the war, its earliest “systematic occurrences” happened in the vanguard of “post-war advanced

gentrification") described the processes by which "disinvested inner-city neighbourhoods [were] upgraded by pioneer gentrifiers and indigenous residents [were] displaced" (ibid. 10). Her ground-breaking documentation of the transformation of working class housing to middle class housing informed other areas of radical change. Hence gentrification is not only "an economic, cultural, political, social, and institutional phenomenon" but also an analytical tool used by urban geographers, social scientists, and urban planners to reveal how "inner-city neighbourhoods became devalorised/disinvested and how they subsequently became revalorised/re invested" (ibid. *xxii*). The applied concept now covers rural gentrification, suburbanisation, privatisation of public space, and so on.

Radical urban change is a contentious issue, framed by its opponents as exploitation (of property, natural resources, and people) and by its proponents as revitalisation and renewal which delivers trickle-down benefits to disadvantaged communities and their run-down neighbourhoods.[103] However, an important survey of recent empirical research studies reveals that "poor evidence" exists to support the claim that social capital, mix and cohesion increases for gentrified precincts' original inhabitants (Lees 2008: 2,449-50; 2,456-63). More disturbingly, a growing evidence base suggests that despite "cosmetic policies," gentrification actually causes or contributes to social "segregation and polarisation" (ibid. 2,463).

As the "class transformation of urban space" is a political minefield, the class issue is downplayed by gentrification's advocates (Lees, Slater & Wyly 2008: 39). Massive social displacement of communities of families, neighbours and local workers frequently drives resistance today, just as the Enclosures did centuries earlier. Geographer Neil Smith depicts contemporary working class residents' attempts to build a political frontier as a response to capital's advancing economic "frontier of profitability" (ibid.). The material spaces, natural features, and cultural heritage imbuing a place with its unique character are not the only things at stake. A set of intangible elements existing on the affective plane—the individual and collective memories, hopes, and histories of those who feel a sense of belonging to place—can also be threatened and defended.[104]

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capitalist cities" such as Boston, London, and New York.

103 The language used by Hong Kong's Urban Renewal Authority (2005) is typical of pro-gentrification argumentation: a "'holistic' and co-ordinated approach" to "revitalisation" will "revive and strengthen the economic and environmental fabric" of "old urban districts."

104 Indigenous Australians frequently use the term "belonging to country" to describe their spiritual and affective connections to specific geographical territories and the cultural stories and familial interconnections associated with the land. Hence, forced dispossession

Gentrification provides a useful tool for abstract analyses of advanced capitalism.[105] The seminal work of Neil Smith connected the "fundamental dynamics" of capitalism to the "fine-grained circumstances of individual land parcels in the inner city, where gentrified wealth collides with disinvested poverty" (Lees, Slater & Wyly 2008: 51). When individual instances of renewal are considered more broadly, gentrification is revealed as "the leading edge of the spatial restructuring of capitalist urbanisation" (ibid. 72). Thus, the phenomenon is "intertwined with processes of globalisation" and "no longer confined to the inner city or to first world metropolises" (ibid. *xvii*). Indeed, it is "the consummate expression of an emerging neo-liberal urbanism" Smith presciently observed in 1982, just three years after neoliberalism's champion, Margaret Thatcher, was appointed as Prime Minister of Britain (ibid. *xxi*). Gentrification, says Smith (1982: 151-152, quoted in Lees, Slater & Wyly 2008: 72),

> is part of a larger redevelopment process dedicated to the revitalisation of the profit rate. In this process, many downtowns are being converted into bourgeois playgrounds... These very visual alterations of the urban landscape...are as rooted in the structure of capitalist society as was the advent of suburbanisation.

As cities "reimagine[d] themselves out of de-industrialisation," city planners and developers drove the construction of "deliberately...middle-class spaces" in the form of large-scale modernist architectural projects encompassing urban waterfronts, hotel and convention complexes, and retail and restaurant districts (Lees, Slater & Wyly 2008: 6) Such geographical "reorderings and restructurings...are vital aspects to the accumulation of capital and the dynamics of class struggle, both historically and

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from the country to which one belongs produces a devastating impact. A young Aboriginal man once told me that the massive beach houses built on the coastal cliffs of his traditional country on South Australia's Yorke Peninsula meant that he could no longer see or feel his ancestral stories, as he showed me how the few undeveloped cliff ridges resembled fish spines and faces. Even highly urbanised societies produce spatial affects, and so gentrification processes severing people from familiar landmarks and localities can evoke individually-experienced anxiety, anger, and so forth, which can spur collective anti-development mobilisations.

105 Marx demonstrated that capital constantly seeks out and exploits new territories in order to expand profits and create new markets. At the same time it must devalorise "previous investments and landscapes" (Lees, Slater & Wyly 2008: 51). In urban settings "massive investments are required" to create the "'built environment'," the places where profits are made (ibid. 50). Yet paradoxically these investments preclude capital from being "easily shifted to newer, more profitable opportunities elsewhere" (ibid.).

today," reminds David Harvey (2000: 31). As a consequence, "class struggle unfolds differentially across this highly variegated terrain" (ibid.). With these general observations in mind, we now turn to a snapshot of Hong Kong's intense urbanisation.

Urban Change in Hong Kong

> Today, the wars that are being fought in the old districts of Hong Kong, are actually invasions of the old communities by the massive metropolitan highrisers and malls which are Capital First. They are actually invasions to uproot and reconstruct the original human network.
>
> —Chan King Fai, 2006

Neon-eyed Hong Kong is an urban Cerberus. One of its three heads has an archaic face of tiny temples and shrines, the second has modernity's face with its Lego-like housing towers, and the third reveals a futuristic face of bladerunning sky scrapers. As exoskeletons of bamboo scaffolding and plastic bunting wrap around the luminescent glass towers, and a mouldy damp coats entire apartment blocks bringing organic irregularity to architectural uniformity, the faces' features meld. Under the mist of an incessant rain a thousand umbrellas bloom.

Hong Kong has undergone a series of dramatic socio-cultural and economic transformations in the modern period. The original cluster of fishing villages rapidly became a trading entrepôt and one of the world's great ports following the 1842 Treaty of Nang King which ceded territory to Britain, and the 1898 leasing of the New Territories. Hong Kong was a "city-state and British colony [with] no national hinterland," and "a Chinese city with a tiny British superstructure" (Meyers 2002: 252-253). Following the 1997 return of the territory to Chinese sovereignty, a "wealthy 'capitalistic' economic system" became controlled by an "impoverished 'socialist' state" (ibid.).[106] Nevertheless, this highly urbanised world city remains "one of the greatest concentrations of decision-makers controlling exchanges of global capital" (ibid.). The built environment reflects these geo-political changes.[107]

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106 Note that Meyers ignores the periodic waves and troughs of China's economic boom which, according to the IMF, began post-1978 (Hu & Khan 1997).

107 The 1961 Hong Kong census revealed that the population density of certain areas was possibly the highest in the world (Dwyer 1971: 2). Hong Kong comprises Hong Kong island, the tip of the Kowloon Peninsula and the New Territories. Increasing numbers of mainland refugees in the late 1940s as the civil war in China progressed boosted the population to 1.6 million prior to WW2 (ibid. 1-2). The Japanese Occupation during World War 2 had caused Hong Kong's population to drop to 600,000; following the war the population increased,

Land reclamation is part of Hong Kong's material expression of modernity, and a "normal measure for the government and developers to extend their spaces in [the] urban centre" (Ip 2007: 4). For the government it is a major revenue source, with up to forty percent of annual income from taxes derived from fifty-year land leases and development rights (Skala 2007). Landfill projects have shrunk Victoria Harbour between the Kowloon shore to Hong Island by over fifty percent, from 7,500 feet to 3,000 feet (ibid.). Extension of land into the sea has concentrated business activities and communications into increasingly dense 'new-build' areas. This tendency supports the influential geographer and scholar David Harvey's general thesis that "capitalist accumulation could not continue and land rent would go down without overcoming its crisis of over-concentration," which perpetuates the "pursuit of land rent by individual capitalists" especially in the central business district (Ip 2007: 4). Hong Kong responds to this crisis by extending its prized harbour waterfront by land reclamation.

Such intense urbanisation has created a situation favourable to capitalism as it reduces to a minimum "excessive daily movement of individuals or goods" (Prescott 1971: 15). The density of labourers has transformed the city into a giant Taylorist machine, a model of commuting efficiency. In this context, any mass resistance to radical changes in the built environment represents a direct challenge to capitalism itself.

With the built environment continuously changing form as tenements, historic buildings, and entire precincts are demolished to make way for new waves of capital accumulation, remaining structures take on a heightened importance for urban inhabitants. The built environment and the natural features are tangible reminders of landmark moments and enduring periods of the city's evolution. Furthermore, in a quasi city-state where the exercise of political power has been confined to an elite, those places which have been sites of previous political struggle will be defended by those who continue to fight for social change.

mainly due to mainland immigration, and by 1970 it had reached 4 million. Mainland emigration was later restricted by the enactment of Rights of Abode laws (Ku 2001). High rents had forced many residents to sublet sections of already compressed spaces, while others gravitated to the huge urban squatter camps (some of which were "miniature towns") in Kowloon (Dwyer 1971: 4). The government responded to the crisis by changing from its policy of laissez faire to one of direct intervention, embarking on a massive construction scheme of high-rise, low-cost accommodation to house urban squatters and mainland immigrants. Planned rapid urbanisation of the hinterland's rural New Territories proceeded, resulting in more lives being directly affected by government intervention, whereas previously inhabitants of agricultural communities were subject to family and communal forms of organisation.

Pier to Pier Resistance: The Star Ferry and Queen's Piers Campaigns

> The success of radical media need not be based simply on the circulation readership of specific titles. Instead, we must consider the network totality of such media; individual calculations are less important than the decentralised, participatory mechanisms that enable a diversity of voices to be heard through a wide range of media.
>
> —Chris Atton, 2002

Built around Victoria Harbour, one part of the city, Kowloon, is attached to mainland China; the other part, Central, is situated on Hong Kong Island. Both parts contain businesses, educational and other institutions, government offices, and residential dwellings. Constant traffic animates the harbour, with thousands of daily commuters and visitors utilising the passenger ferries, including the Star Ferry, operational since 1898.[108] The Star Ferry Pier was constructed in Central in the 1950s and has held an iconic status in the city's collective memory. The nearby Queen's Pier has been similarly important as the site of arrivals, departures, inaugurations, and anchorage for British dignitaries; most recently it symbolised the end of British colonialism as the point of departure of the last governor.

Both piers share a monumental quality which reflects the "postwar development of colonial modernity in Hong Kong...integral parts of the new public space" (Ip 2007: 3-4). Moreover, the harbour frontage comprising the Queen's Pier, City Hall and Star Ferry Complex, signifies not only a "localisation process of colonial administrative power" but also a "space for anti-colonial movement since the 1960s" (Lam 2007c). It was the site for the 1966 Star Ferry riots, the Chinese Language Movement, and the Protect Daiyu Island movement (ibid.; Lam, W-M 2004: 115-124). The two iconic piers would evolve new symbolic meanings as they became unexpected obstacles to a reclamation project which preferenced this third global financial centre's further development over the wishes of the populace (Ip op. cit. 4).

In 1999 the government announced a land reclamation plan to enable the construction of a six-lane highway (Central-Wan Chai Bypass), a low-rise shopping mall, and a seaside park. However, the associated plan to demolish the Star Ferry and Queen's Piers was kept secret, and the Government ignored the few who did know, including architects proposing alternative preservation plans (Lam 2007: 58). Hong Kong

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108 Hong Kong's main public transport systems (tram, ferry and bus) are mainly private enterprises paying receipt-based royalties to government. The Star Ferry service linked the Hong Kong Island's northern coast to the Kowloon Peninsula "by the shortest route" (Leung 1971: 138-9).

citizens try to “engage government in constructive ways when they see that public policy and governance are deeply flawed,” and as they are denied democratic representation, they engage in “social activism” to change that which affects “their daily lives, and possibly the lives of the next generation” (Poon 2007, no page numbers). In 2001 the government dismissed the conclusions of a commissioned scholarly study on the piers' historical importance, and non-confrontational small-scale forms of protest during this period failed to halt the plans. Three years later over 10,000 people attended a mass rally organised by the Society for Protection of the Harbour on 2 May 2004, and although this achieved modest legal gains for future reclamation projects the piers' fate remained bleak (Ip 2007: 4). By 2006 there was scant media coverage of the issue, and the few reports published reflected the people's “nostalgic mood” and avoidance of “direct confrontation” (ibid.). Most “ordinary citizens” had not known about the demolition until 2006 because both mainstream and independent media tended to ignore historical preservation and planning issues (ibid.).

Yet local activism in general had been escalating since the 1 July 2003 rally. Stymied by a non-representative political system, people fought for ownership of their city and their right to influence decision-making. Hong Kong's legislature is “largely dominated by self-serving, business-oriented functional constituencies,” implying that citizens are not “politically mature enough” to handle representative government” (Poon op. cit.). Consequently, many “middle class and professionals see civic activism as a means to combat their helplessness in the face of an administration hooked on top-down policy making and whose highly-paid officials are either apathetic to or ignorant of the plight and aspirations of ordinary citizens” (ibid.). Central to many concerns are issues that affect the “sense of belonging as Hong Kong citizens,” including “town planning, urban renewal, cultural development, heritage preservation, the environment, land disposal and neighbourhood sustainability” (ibid.).[109]

Public interest in the piers reawakened as the December 2006 demolition date approached. In June 2006 Leung Po, artist and Hong Kong In-Media editor, contributed the first article on the website, complaining about the “malady of the city” whose

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109 Previous “prominent episodes of citizen protest” around urban planning issues included the controversial 2006 West Kowloon Cultural District 40-hectare land tender (Poon 2007). Coordinated public outcry had prevented the government from granting “a 50-year leasehold land grant and 30-year management right of the site to one single developer consortium” (ibid.). Protests failed to halt other developments, including the controversial harbour front reclamation, and the Wedding Card Street demolition. This historic Wan Chai precinct was transformed into Wedding City, with high-rise towers, high-rent shops, and car parks displacing small family-run businesses.

symptoms included the closing of an independent intellectual book store and the impending pier demolition (Lam 2007a: 61). Po's critique inspired others to publish their own commentaries on Hong Kong In-Media. This spontaneous momentum set in motion a renewed wave of public opposition to the demolition.

In August 2006 a group of Youth Centre students studying public art created a series of performances and installations outside the Star Ferry Pier (see Figure 2 on page 90). Local artists/educators Choi Tsz-kwan, Ger, and Tsang Tak-ping had facilitated this workshop as an experiment to bring classroom learning into the public sphere. The project affected the students tremendously and they produced diverse works, as Lam (ibid. 58) explains: "some expressed a sense of loss; some showed the disappearance of Star as a losing of direction; some represented the pier as social history; some were nostalgic; some were in a mourning mood and some showed their anger." Whilst mainstream media homogenised the symbolic interventions by representing only the "nostalgic mood," passers-by made their own more nuanced readings (ibid. 59). The actions generated "public awareness/wonderings/feelings as to the meaning of Star Pier in relation to Hong Kong" (ibid. 61).

Crucially, these affective responses were later "politicised" into a grass roots citizen campaign initiated by media activists (ibid.). The art students had inscribed their feelings about the Pier onto a "disappearing space," but although this had reignited public interest in the issue the symbolic actions alone could not "prevent the space from disappearing" (activist statement translated by Lam, ibid.). Demolition commenced in late November 2006, and, following calls for public protest, people rallied at Government offices on 3 December 2006. Two days later a human chain flanked the construction site.

Hong Kong In-Media was the central alternative news platform for reports, visual documentation, and collective reflection during this period. Once again people experimented with forms of action media. Chu Hoi-dick published an article expressing doubt about "'photo-shooting' gestures of protest" and "nostalgic mood" which kick-started an important online discussion amongst local activists (ibid. 61). People connected the piers' consultation and development processes to a long history of imposed changes which had impacted on millions of residents' daily lives and sensibilities. The collective interrogation sharpened the debate through the analysis of the underlying power relations and political ideology propelling local gentrification processes.

Figure 2, Site-specific Performances at Star Ferry Pier

Figure 2: Artists' Performance and Installation at Star Ferry Pier, 2006. Photographs courtesy Choi Tze Kwan.

Figure 3, Protest Banners at Queen's Pier

Figure 3: Banners at Queen's Pier. Image courtesy of Hong Kong Digital Vision.

One campaign milestone was Ger's published critique of the art students' symbolic actions. As a key organiser of the public art interventions Ger politicised the "important and meaningful" struggle over development, framing the fight as being for "our participation in the city in the cultural and historical context, not simply as common memory, not as mere personal emotions" (ibid. 62)[110] Ger was convinced that the activists needed to halt the "wrong representation" of the Star Ferry pier's "funeral" if they were to secure public support for "future struggles concerning the city." The current campaign lacked significant public support because

> when the public finished all that ceremony (taking photos, tears, travel with the last ship....etc.), they wouldn't keep it alive in order to make their ceremony reasonable! They would just give it up. That's how people treat the sort of memory that we are emphasising in this action. Of course, the mass media are responsible at this point too. Coz they reported the whole thing as a good memory that we have to keep (something easily solved by taking a photo and scanning it). From the very first, we failed to keep the emphasis on our concerns for the city, to keep our own aim. We have lost already (Ger, cited in Lam 2007a: 62).

Yeung Yang, an artist who participated in the human chain action, reflected on the relationship between "organised social action" and "personal transformation." His perspective on the importance of individualised experiences echoes sociologist Kevin McDonald's (2006: *vi*) argument that "embodied intersubjectivities" are driving new social movements. Yang was unsure what it would take to have an "'organised' front based on degrees of solidarity," acknowledging that although people had developed a political critique it had not reached the point where they understood how their "bodies relate to social space" and could "respond to it revealingly." Yet his "hunch" was that activism required this.[111]

Campaign momentum increased following breaking news published by a citizens' group that they had discovered serious lies told by the Secretary for Home Affairs (Lam 2007a: 63). Activists worked as investigative journalists while the mainstream media still remained silent. People formed another human chain at the construction site, and on 12 December 2006 the chain action morphed into a thirty-six hour occupation by twenty activists (including five In-Media editors). Their actions suspended demolition of

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110 All quotes by Ger translated by Oiwan Lam (2007a: 62) from Ger's original Cantonese posting on Hong Kong In-Media.

111 Translated by Oiwan Lam (2007a: 63) from Yeung Yang's posting on Hong Kong In-Media.

the distinctive Clock Tower which now symbolised the piers movement. A sit-in outside a government official's home and other spontaneous actions followed (Ip 2007: 6).

Finally the campaign's "radical turn" had generated mainstream media coverage and the first real government intervention, as it had caused a "small political crisis" (Ip 2007: 5; Lam 2007a: 63). Although individual activists held different political positions, [112] they unified around the common goal to "stop demolition" (Lam 2007a: 63). Legco's "governing power" challenged, the government accelerated the demolition (ibid.). The "brutal" order to "crush the clock tower overnight and ship the stone in land fill area so there wouldn't be any 'false hope'" outraged the public (Lam 2007c). In an excessive show of force one hundred police officers attempted to break up the occupation on 13 December 2006, and a single activist was arrested, with others forming a human chain to prevent her removal (Ip 2007: 5). As the conflict intensified mainstream media covered the issue's more spectacular elements extensively.

The piers had become a microcosm of Hong Kong which exposed elements of the city-state's power dynamics. As citizen reporters kept "digging up new information" they "entered an area which touches the core of the city's social, economic, cultural and historical politics that materialised in spatial management" (Lam 2007c). The land and property market had driven the economy since the 1980s, causing government and developers to develop "very close partner relations" whilst neglecting the citizens' desires (ibid.). Neoliberalism's trinity of Public Private Partnerships commodified and privatised even natural features such as views. The Star Ferry Pier's iconic clock tower was just an "obstruction" to clear off in a waterfront redevelopment whose 400 metre long "ground-scraping" shopping mall's harbour view would privilege the International Financial Centre's (IFC) campus (ibid.).

Citizen reporters unearthed more controversial news which the mainstream media had "hesitated" to raise: the government secretly planned to construct the People's Liberation Army berth on the newly-cleared waterfront. Thus Central's waterfront would be dominated by "four symbolic landmarks" representing money, consumerism, state power, and military power (ibid.). The IFC, shopping mall, government offices and navy berth would usurp the peoples' pier in gentrification's "class remake of the central urban landscape" (Smith, cited in Lees, Slater & Wylie 2008: 139). If the neoliberal state is the market's "agent" rather than its "regulator," then naturally the government would preference corporate allegiances over citizens' desires (ibid. 163).

One distinguishing feature of the piers campaign was its use of diverse forms of

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112 These positions ranged from liberalism (some suggested negotiation with Legco members) to anarchism (many others denied the "representative status of the lawmakers") (Ip 2007: 5).

protest, which in turn captured the attention of citizens and the mainstream media. These modalities also expanded the emergent social movement's own "grammars of experience," (McDonald 2006) mapping new ways to collectively agitate for a "long-term and citywide resistance movement against the bulldozers driven by government and private developers" (Ip 2007: 6). Hence the campaign combined long-term strategy with short-term tactics. Activists frequently integrated internet and mobile phone communications to mobilise direct actions. A candlelight vigil organised by Hong Kong In-Media to celebrate the Star Ferry Pier's 49th and final birthday on 14 December 2006 was one such instance. Over two hundred people gathered outside the heavily guarded construction site, some attempting to breach the barriers. The police provoked "anger and emotion" when they cordoned off some activists as protesters tried to rescue the detainees (ibid. 6-7). Protesters texted their friends to join them at the pier, and Hong Kong In-Media published an action appeal. After many hours, thirteen people were arrested, questioned, threatened with various charges, and then released.

A 49-hour hunger strike launched after the clock tower demolition on 16 December again combined various protest modalities, mobilising strong public support. Lawmakers from most political parties became involved, academics organised a signature campaign, and numerous citizens made site visits in solidarity with those fasting. On December 17, two hundred people broke the police cordon outside Government House. The hunger strike ended with a collective chant that modified Mao Tse-Tsung's use of a classical proverb—*A single spark can start a prairie fire!*—to acknowledge the potency of coming together in acts of refusal.[113]

Throughout the Star Ferry Pier campaign the Hong Kong In-Media website was an electronic gathering point where people could share "personal reflections" after each event, collectively review tactics and outcomes, plan the next interventions, and discuss "movement strategies" (Lam 2007a: 63). Over one hundred reports, commentaries, and announcements were published in December 2006 alone. The immediacy of internet communications coupled with the experience of shared telepresence in a space of solidarity complemented the embodied actions performed at the pier. In the three months following the demolition people used the website as a "bulletin board" to announce events, and as a forum to discuss "historical preservation, urban planning and local culture," ensuring that the larger issues remained active (Ip 2007: 6).

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113 "...our forces, although small at present, will grow very rapidly....When we look at a thing, we must examine its essence and treat its appearance merely as an usher at the threshold, and once we cross the threshold, we must grasp the essence of the thing; this is the only reliable and scientific method of analysis" (Tse-Tsung 1930).

Some Hong Kong In-Media's core members set up a “loose network” called “Local Action” to link the Star Ferry Pier [SFP] movement with other community-based preservation movements, using the website as an important organisational platform (ibid.). Iam-Chong Ip's choice of terminology is interesting as it both acknowledges the principle organisational form (network) chosen by the activists, and its type (loose/unstructured/informal). The network prioritised the Queen’s Pier [QP] preservation, strategically linking this immediate goal to broader issues of “procedural justice and future planning of the waterfront” (Lam 2007b).

The Local Action network created temporary autonomous zones (TAZ) and reclaimed the streets, adapting global activist tactics to local circumstances, a cross-pollination illustrating the viral quality of resistance (Bey 1985).[114] By reclaiming Queen's Pier as a TAZ for exhibitions, concerts, and public talks, Local Action simultaneously deepened people’s affective attachment to the space and marked the space as belonging to the domain of the common (see Figure 3 on page 90). The various events raised awareness about related issues including the “government's consultative politics, heritage policy, human rights and police violence, local culture, [and] planning” (Ip 2007: 6). By now the government understood how important the informational sphere was in such conflicts. Consequently, they allowed the Local Action's “strike and run” tactics to proceed without “direct confrontations” with police, in order to avoid escalating the spectacle and re-engaging mainstream media attention (ibid.).

The ferry piers campaigns had birthed a “new generation of activists,” a multitude of sorts, demanding “decolonialisation...via people’s participation in planning” in accordance with Hong Kong's democratisation tradition (Lam 2007c*)*. A fluid network of people entered and exited the actions at different times, interweaving embodied and online actions. Their collective actions generated an empowering shared subjectivity amongst not only protesters but also those following the events via the media. A social flow of doing was made manifest via city tours, people’s planning consultations, movement history sharing, music and dance performances, and demonstrations. This flow exemplifies a “scream of anger” transformed by a collective “doing” to a “scream

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114 Hakim Bey (1985) is a philosopher, poet, and activist. His concept of Temporary Autonomous Zones has influenced countless activists and artists, and the neologism TAZ is common currency within many Do It Yourself (DIY) subcultures. A TAZ is created when people sharing common affinities gather to make self-managed events, from happenings, squat raves, workshops, protests, and so forth. A TAZ engenders a common sense of spirit amongst people whose social ties might otherwise be loose or non-existent. It can generate material, symbolic, and affective outcomes, and although ephemeral by nature it can leave traces of the collective doing which happened.

of hope, a confident scream of anti-power," echoing one of John Holloway's (2005: 40) key tropes.

Ultimately this ecstatic scream failed to halt the development. The Star Ferry Pier was reconstructed as a "Disney-style" structure mimicking a 19th century "Western-style" pier, with collective memories supposedly preserved in computer visualisations of the original pier (Lam 2007a: 61). Yet the unanticipated strength of this new citizens' movement prompted a surprised government to accept partial responsibility for inadequate consultation processes. Subsequently, they drew more parties into community consultations, but favoured "very moderate think-tanks" who had been absent from the protests, prompting claims that the consultative process was a "forgery" (Ip 2007: 7; Lee Chi Leung 2007).[115] During the demolition postponement period throughout 2007, the Local Action network continued interventions, occupations, and human chains which periodically confronted police force (Pang 2007).

The Queen's Pier preservation campaign achieved "miracle" status in local history; the protesters' tenacity and persistence was especially notable given Hong Kong's "pessimistic and materialistic society" (Lam 2007b). Although some regarded the demolition as "inevitable" and accepted the government's "so-called relocation plan" as a compromise, others "elevated their action and decided to fight for the grade 1 heritage until the last minute" (ibid.). These activists occupied the pier for over two months in 2007, demanding its "in situ preservation" (ibid.). On 1 July 2007, the 10th anniversary of reunification, the campaign "set another record in creating a mass civil disobedient act" by urging citizens to disregard police barricades and join them at the pier to view the fireworks (ibid.). In this symbolic moment, a few hundred people enjoyed the fireworks, celebrating with "story telling, street drama performance, drum music and street dancing" (ibid.). An English-language summary and 9-minute documentation video of this event is published on the interlocals.net website; the joyful, defiant dancing, drumming, and whooping mirrors the celebratory dimension enacted in new social movements the world over (Lam 2007b).

The Queen's Pier eventually was demolished in February 2008, and Oiwan Lam (2009a) offers a Chinese cultural twist to the narrative:

> The Star Ferry Pier is now moved to the new coast which is far away from the city centre. As for the Queen's Pier, it has been cut into pieces and dumped in some remote storing places for future re-composition—but we don't know where. The old coast line will be further straightened so that it can be used as a PLA (people liberation

115 See Hong Kong Planning Department (2008) for various public consultation documents.

> army) berth for showing off the military power of our motherland at the heart of our city. During this year's global financial crisis, rumour said that the fall of HSBC's stock price was because of the bad *Fengshui* [which] resulted from land reclamation of the Central seafront (Lam 2009a).

Revival of public interest in the two ferry piers had surprised politicians, media, and activists, causing people to question why “a fading subject” had generated such “momentum” (Lam 2007a: 63). The Queen's Pier was more than a “symbol of colonialism,” according to citizen journalist/translator Lee Chi Leung (2007). Popular attachment to both piers was political rather than sentimental, forward-looking as well as nostalgic. The Queen’s Pier had been built in 1953 when colonial rule “gave way to a modernist architectural style that emphasises simplification of form and utilitarian pragmatism” (ibid.). Leung's deconstruction highlights the precinct's affective associations. His observations underscore the vital role that collective embodied and experiential elements play in campaigns, as, unlike petitions and letter-writing, they can summon powerful affective states which can translate into political mobilisation.

> Facing the main entrance of City Hall, itself a kind of citizen space, the current Queen’s Pier is also considered a marker of government's turn to cooptive politics. The whole spatial cluster thus epitomises the colonial political history of Hong Kong. Through this space, we can make sense of the past, and this space would serve as coordinates in creating our institutions and histories....People of Hong Kong had made much creative subversion against symbolism of colonial rule....At their central location in the city, Queen's Pier together with (old) Star Ferry Pier nearby had been major sites of civil resistances....It has been continuously a gathering and assembly place for many anti-imperialist, anti-war and social justice resistances and happenings. The movement for the preservation of piers that sparked last year is also bringing new meanings to the locale (Leung 2007, no page number).

Explanations for renewed public interest ranged from the “post-modern flash mob aggregation” to the emergence of a “new activism...which rejects the politics of public relations” (Lam 2007a: 64). However, these hypotheses fail to “capture the delicate rationality of media activism,” whose protagonists share a core belief that “reporting is a transformative power for both the individual and the society” (ibid.).

> Through engaged / subjective / analytical / emotional writing and reporting, an individual makes his / her own claim for the event, and becomes part of an incident. ...the media activist believes in what s/he writes, takes responsibility and jumps into the story of his / her own construction. They are not writing for the past alone, but also for the future (Lam 2007a: 64).

Action media takes the form of an open circuit in which an external situation triggers research, which in turn generates collective action, followed by self-reflexive analysis. The labour performed by grassroots journalists enables communities to "analyse one's historical situation, which transforms consciousness, and leads to the will to change the situation," says Michael Traber (1985, cited in Atton 2002: 113). Media activism aims to radicalise thought, spurring new constitutive radical identities. When people become aware of how power manifests in their specific, localised circumstances, the generalised conditions of the logic of power also can become apparent. This is the basis of Freirean praxis. Actions must be developed along strategic as well as tactical lines for sustained social transformation.

The Star Ferry Pier campaign had highlighted that script-writing was a "most significant battlefield," exposing how the government had tried to 'spin' the campaign, promoting concepts such as "'relocation' and 'collective memories' to dilute the campaign's political significance" (Lam 2007a: 64). The "radicalisation" of the piers campaign began with Hoi-dick's reports which had argued that the "nostalgic mood" created by the artistic interventions were politically impotent, suggesting that instead the campaign must target the government's decision-making process and specific officials (ibid.). Subsequently, activists used the internet to collectively generate a potent script to inspire more confrontational actions such as a dramatic midnight pursuit of a key official. "The representation of the event (script), via action, pushes the flow / development of the event," explains Lam (ibid.). Integration of symbolic, discursive, and direct action made a multi-pronged mobilisation, building popular momentum which flowed through to the mainstream media. Hence the general public became aware of the core issues and ways in which they could participate.

As the symbolic gestures invited open interpretations, they aggregated people with different motivations: sentimental, environmental, social, and political. This chaotic differentiation recalls Clemencia Rodriguez's (2001: 22) analogy likening citizens' media to a "multitude of small forces" surfacing and bursting "like bubbles in a swamp," indicating flourishing life. Similarly "democratic communication" is a live creature, contracting and expanding with its own "very vital rhythms" which reveal the constant renegotiation of power relations in the struggle for true democracy (ibid.).

The public art project had radicalised the students via a cumulative process, co-facilitator Tsang Tak-ping noted. Once the students realised why they were at the piers, they began asking how they could save the space. But if a "single and overarching script" had existed from the outset, it is doubtful that people would have come together for such a "prolonged fight" (Lam 2007a: 65.) The collective conscientisation had escalated the contestation, and when the government forcefully responded participants maintained their position and extended their intellectual analysis. The media activists' contributions on Hong Kong In-Media functioned as "an articulating power able to draw people with diverse interests together with a clearer agenda" (ibid. 66). Linkages were made with migrant worker groups, as thousands of Filipina domestic workers were accustomed to picnicking on the waterfront public spaces on their half-day off. Hence people's use of this online media platform strengthened, broadened and escalated democratic processes in a city accustomed to shutting out popular (let alone marginalised) voices from important development decisions.

The preceding account demonstrates how urban development issues are locally emplaced within an historical-cultural-political matrix. These issues link to globalisation discourses on neoliberalism. Just as the features of the built environment were embedded in the historical and functional warp and weft of this harbour city's weave, so too were the collective forms of activism similarly embedded, expressing Hong Kong's past, present, and future identity. The demolition of the piers and old neighbourhoods robbed citizens of the "right to live their daily commoners' lives," commented one protester, and if this trend continued without check little would be left for people (Poon 2007). The mediatised collective experiences had "raised people's conscious on preservation of history, culture and environment, as well as spatial justice in urban planning" (O. Lam, pers. comm. 8 December 2009). The piers campaign ignited other urban renewal debates,[116] demonstrating that contestations over city ownership and claims for political citizenship involved continual overlapping cycles of coming to awareness and resistance which could not be contained (and therefore controlled) forever in officially tolerated mass events such as the "seven one" protests.

Essentially these struggles over the city were not so much about space, but rather

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116 These debates won some gains for citizens: for the Wanchai renewal project "the wedding card street was gone, but 'blue house' was preserved," and for the Central renewal project "the central wet market district will be reconstructed, but the old police dormitory and market building will be preserved" (O. Lam, pers. comm. 8 December 2009). Furthermore, a rapid railway construction prompted the "preservation campaign" of a northern new territories village; this issue generated "several big mobilisations," and a civic group sought to block the Legco's construction budget (ibid.).

about life. This supports Hardt and Negri's (2009: 249-260) thesis that the metropolis has become the paradigmatic site of struggle, as it aggregates both the forms of exploitation and the keys to resistance. Physical encounters within Hong Kong's contested sites were joyous more often than they were violent, and creative more than destructive, generating positive affects as well as anger, and shared hope rather than individual resignation. Effective social activism must inspire optimism about the possibility of social transformation, and as the new social movements resist dogmatism and rigid ideologies, it can be hard to quantify what measures they use to generate imagination and affect. In the final part of this chapter I discuss the transformative potential of Hong Kong In-Media through revisiting ideas about biolabour, multitude, and the common, and highlighting two "border-crossing" media projects.

Part 4, Liberation

The Production of the Common

> This is an ethic of the present....committed to living differently now, as opposed to programmatic or linear attempts to shape the future. This experience of turning an abstracted functional space into a space of embodied communication becomes immensely powerful, globalising along networks of information and emotion.
>
> —Kevin McDonald, 2006

The internet as an abstract concept is now part of a cross-cultural social imaginary, inspiring forms of social organisation and cooperative exchange contrary to the processes of control, data mining, enclosures, and commodification which have overcoded the material internet's early utopian promises. If Cyberpunk had emerged in the 21st century, perhaps its console cowboy anti-heroes would have been more radical.

As capital follows its Darwinian imperative to survive and multiply by expanding like science fiction's *The Blob* into new geo-spatial territories and fields of commodification, it creates new puddles of biolabour across a planet in which the ruse of geopolitical compartmentalisation no longer works. The jig is up. Globalisation has knitted together such a complex pattern of interdependencies that its totalising processes of expropriation and commodification now paradoxically provide the mechanisms, spaces, skills, and collective conceptual frames to enable a "twenty-first century communism," some argue (Dyer-Witherford 1999: 2).

To what extent is Hong Kong In-Media a project of social transformation, prefiguring or building a new social form? How does local internet-based media activism create

new network structures, common resources, and constitutive identities which could potentially destabilise capitalism making way for new social relations? Individualised embodied experience and collective networked agency appear to be pathways to transformation, and here it can be helpful to interbraid abstract theory with specific examples. Firstly, I revisit the nexus between postindustrial capitalism and the emergence of new radical subjectivities. Secondly, I present two more recent initiatives: the interlocals.net online regional news portal, and the *Info-Rhizome* book.

Capital "undermines the basis of its own rule" because it sets in motion the "powers of scientific knowledge and social cooperation," Marx concluded from his examination of automation's impact (Dyer-Witherford 1999: 4). Informationalisation intensifies this tendency. The "unleashing of computerisation...within a context of general commodification" is linked to "massive crises" ranging from un/underemployment and the working poor, to the corporatisation of culture, to knowledge enclosures, to the extreme of patenting actual lifeforms and gene sequences (ibid. 7). Work is "no longer activity, production, and profession," said sociologist Alain Touraine in 1979, as on the cusp of informationalisation it had already become "relationships, communication, and status." Touraine has been credited with coining the term "post-industrial society" in 1971 to encapsulate the massive changes afoot; philosopher of education and activist Ivan Illich also examined the "post-industrial phenomenon" and its emancipatory aspects in his 1973 *Tools for Conviviality* (Kahn & Kellner 2007). Changing societal conditions generate new forms of resistance, with autonomously-organised struggles "concentrate[d] and diffuse[d] across space in a way that mirrors the actions of capital" (Harvey 2000: 25). In the "biopolitical economy" "society as a whole is the chief site of productive activity and, correspondingly, the prime site of labour conflict and revolt against capital" (Hardt & Negri 2009: 292).

The precarious nature of biopolitical labour contributes to new processes of class composition, which in turn effect the social field. In Hong Kong's case, by 2002 a sizable number of IT workers had been dot.com busted into unemployment (Ip 2009: 56). These biopolitical workers started undoing capital's interweaving of "technology and power," using the threads to "make a different pattern" (Dyer-Witherford 1999: 71). Most of them owned comparable machines of production (computers, laptops, recording devices) to those of their ex-employers. Moreover their talents were embodied as knowledges—of linguistic, design, technical, and cultural. Those skills which they once had rented to capital, they could now donate to pro-democracy projects. Capital had created these bio-serfs to advance its own expansion.[117] As free agents these skilled

117 Post-Autonomism and associated theoretical positions refute techno-utopian visions epitomised by those advanced by sociologist Daniel Bell. Bell's oft-quoted 1973 work *The*

"virtuosos" explored the liberatory promise within the "infernal" ICTs by building new assemblages such as internet radio and online fora which capital itself had not yet imagined, and which therefore (initially) escaped state control.[118]

The emergent collective awareness occurring in Hong Kong belongs to a continuum of struggles within technologically advanced societies. New social movements—peace, environmental, feminist, student—sprang from this kind of collective consciousness. All were self-organised in a postindustrial rather than industrial mode, reflecting a "profound shift in societal type" argues Touraine (McDonald 2006: 24-5).[119] These new movements do not "defend collective identity" but rather they "contest social relationships" (ibid. 26). Similarly, today's struggles are directly communicated, bypassing traditional hierarchical representative forms (unions, student bodies) to build new social relations which cut (albeit slowly) across traditional class and cultural divides. A particular instance of this tendency is well documented in Tarì & Vanni's (2005) exposition documenting how a new generation of Italian activists and precarious workers co-invented and employed a range of radical media forms (from a new Catholic saint to a fake high fashion designer) to shine light on neoliberalised labour fragmentation and casualisation, using non-traditional, highly-mediated and carnivalesque modes of protest to raise public awareness of the issues, and build cross-sector solidarity.

The interdisciplinary field of complexity theory has influenced how some sociologists, most notably John Urry, consider the techno-social realm. Complexity theory posits social systems as "unstable" and thus "better understood as nonequilibrium, where small events can produce large and unpredictable effects"

Coming of Post-Industrial Society predicted a "classless society" undertaking "nonalienated work," and a rational future steered by cadres of knowledge professionals (Dyer-Witherford op. cit. 19-27). See also Barbrook's (2010) categorisation of new forms of old class divisions.

118 In contrast, conventional wireless broadcasting is increasingly regulated, with the government rejecting license applications for spurious reasons. This has caused the birth of a number of underground stations including Citizen's Radio since 2005 (Ip 2009: 60-62).

119 In his 1971 book *The May Movement* Alain Touraine (1979: 58-64) placed the individual (rather than social groups) at the heart of France's "cultural revolution" in May 1968, a struggle involving the "whole fabric of society." Individual subjects resisted a society in which the "production apparatus" had destroyed the "barriers of private, local, and professional life" and "in which power hides behind the apparent neutrality of technical operations and networks." This "movement of ideas" and the uprisings it provoked, battled "in the name of anti-power," and revealed the logic of capitalist power in "post-industrial societies." Today there is an enduring body of analysis—New Social Movement (NSM) theory—which builds upon the work of Touraine.

(McDonald 2006: 9). Hence complex systems, including deeply integrated economic systems, are "increasingly subject to shockwaves" (ibid.). In today's "pluriverse" Urry argues that "increasingly complex social life is closer to a fluid of moving across an uneven surface than to 19th-century metaphors of the machine" (cited in ibid. 13, 9). The recuperated political figure of the multitude is similarly fluid, a network of networks comprised of multiplying singularities moving sometimes as one (again as in *The Blob)* across the material and electronic surfaces of the planet. The post-Autonomist multitude fits with Touraine's post-1968 analysis that the "new movements would be a new 'class actor'" (ibid. 27; see also Touraine 1979: 350-362). As more movements from below emerge and interconnect with one another we can sense the political potential of a "democracy of the multitude" in contrast to today's "predominant" form of sovereignty, the "republic of property" (Hardt & Negri 2009: 5, 8, 21).

Discussions of property lead us to notions of the common. Diverse instances of the common are being identified and fought over, from battles over the privatisation of water to the enclosures of cultural materials by regimes of digital rights management (Barlow 2001; May 2003). The abstract figure of the *common* is philosophically and politically different to that of the *public*, which in the past has been foregrounded in the private/public dichotomy. Whereas the public implies the existence of the State which will regulate and administer access to those things considered to be public, the common is conceived as belonging to everyone and therefore outside of external forms of control and enclosure whether by the state or the private sector.[120] The common, such as "common knowledge and culture," should be considered as conceptually separate from "the public, institutional attempt to regulate access to it" (Hardt & Negri 2009: 282). The common "exists on a different plane from the private and the public, and is fundamentally autonomous" from them (ibid.).

Experimental techno-social media assemblages such as the internet radio stations mentioned earlier build participatory and politicising cultures around them, evolving new paradigms for production and exchange which impact the surrounding mediascape and social terrain. These are projects of the common, the product of loosely-structured networks whose members share compatible yet differentiated visions about the kind of

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120 David Berry's (2008) discussion of the common draws on classical Roman typology on ownership covering differences amongst *res nullis* (things belonging to no one); *res private, res publica, res universitatis, res imperium, res divini juris,* and most relevant for my discussion, *res communes,* that is, the common things which cannot be subject to regimes of ownership. This idea has been further advanced by Hardt and Negri (2009) in *Commonwealth*.

society they want to inhabit. There is only a short period between the imagination's materialisation and its appropriation—by the state to make it public (or illegal), or by the corporate sector to make it private. The imperative from the margins is to seize the moment, build common platforms for production of the common, and make uncommon mayhem!

Hong Kong In-Media produces the common in the sense that the biopolitical (and free) labour which gives it form and content generates cultural knowledge that belongs to everyone. This content is not fenced off behind paywalls, nor are its makers and readers constrained by how they can further circulate and build upon it. Hong Kong In-Media also produces a sense of belonging, belonging to a network, and by extension, to interconnected nodes and networks. The network can be a physical or electronic or social form of the common. When we produce and belong to the common, we are on the threshold of liberation, part of a collective flow of doing and being which rejects the capture of the socially-produced to serve the interests of the few. Two Hong Kong In-Media projects focusing on the production of a "border-crossing" common hint at the emancipatory potential of politically-engaged participatory culture.

Interlocals.net and *Info-Rhizome*

> A communicator has the capacity and motivation to be a facilitator of social change, and he or she is equipped with something very few journalists have: a strategic perspective of communication for development and the conviction that communication is not about messages but about processes of transformation and social change.
>
> —Alfonso Gumucio Dagron, 2006

The rise of citizens' media enlarges the base of not only "potential contributors to political dialogue," but crucially "potential actors in the political scene" (Yong 2009: 14-15). It has been over a decade since activists created the Active software which underpinned Indymedia, and so perhaps citizen journalism no longer seems as revolutionary as it once did. However, it has fundamentally changed the global mediascape. Open publishing platforms encourage readers to become writers themselves, either leaping straight in with a story or by taking incremental, confidence-building steps which start by commenting on articles. As more social actors enter the mix, the "notion of writing for the media is transformed into an egalitarian, devolved and communicational tool for theory and for action" (Atton 2002: 111). We are "players in a Circle that allows for ideas to be circular, rather than to be top-down," posits journalist and media activist Deepa Fernandes (cited in Boler: 38). For Al Jazeera reporter Hassan Ibrahim (cited in Boler: 16) citizen journalism is a "revolution"

> because the first time an average human walk[s] down the streets of Jakarta, New York, or Khartoum, or Darfur, and actually picks up the phone and dials a number and reports what they see—you're recruiting journalists from all over the world, people who know nothing about the secrets of the trade, of the industry, but they just saw something and they want to report it. And that's a revolution, when you have millions and millions of reporters around the world.

Global movements are constituted by "new kinds of networks and flows of communication, action, and experience," rather than by fixed ideologies and programs (McDonald 2006). Therefore they must must start with people's concerns, the issues which "touch their heart," and strategically inter-link these with a "social transformation agenda" (Lam 2006c). Digital platforms and networks enable new methods of collective reflection, social experimentation, and direct action, opening up a new "grammar of action" in which "embodied intersubjectivity" is given at least as much weight as "functional imperatives" (McDonald op. cit. 63-4).

Two self-organised events—the New Media and Social Transformation Conference in Hong Kong in December 2005, and a convergence in Seoul in March 2006 coordinated by a Korean people's media groups alliance, brought Asian media activists together in face-to-face exchange. These events energised participants, generating a momentum for further regional co-operation. Participants identified common problems localised activism faces in its engagement with the inter-local and the global, and agreed upon a possible solution: to build a crossborder/cross-movement portal.

The impressive bodies of knowledge and resources which "people's media" generate are frequently atomised. Therefore network nodes must cooperate on a meta-level, transforming their "aggregation of voices," "echo chamber media," and disconnected localised liberation efforts into transglobal dialogue and interconnected movements. (Lam 2006c). For example, although several thousand regional activists from different regions shared the same space during the anti-WTO protests they had little "understanding" of one another, because most alternative Asian media were "too localised" (Lam, cited in McKinnon 2006). This situation was compounded by mainstream international news reportage which focused on "globalised stories on political economy" rather than local political issues, and hence "marginalised social movements" and the concerns of the people went unrepresented (ibid.).

An informal network arising from the two gatherings decided to redress this situation by building a self-managed electronic space on the internet for Asian media activists. This coordinated communicative platform aimed to foster "border-crossing" perspectives, solidarity, and actions. Sustained critical thinking conducted with others

can start to dissolve powerlessness.[121] For

> if the general is to be grasped at all...it must be grasped not directly, all that once, but by instances, differences, variations and particulars; in a piecemeal fashion, case-by-case. In a splintered world, we must address the splinters (Alberta Arthurs, cited in McDonald 2006: 13).

In September 2006 interlocals.net was launched as an online information clearing house in which local independent media from around the region would "maintain a platform for sharing news and information and translate them back into their languages and local media" (Lam, cited in Hadl 2007, no page number).[122] It would be a "bridge for independent media," including Indymedia Centres, to overcome problems of "diverse languages" and mutual understanding "often distorted by nationalisms" (ibid.). Cultural "translation and contextualization" was vital if the project was to do more than just aggregate "local grassroots information" (ibid.).

Lam (ibid.) describes how "inter-local media exchange" worked after interlocals.net received a call for support for Osaka homeless:

> ...if we just translated and circulated it, it would not draw much support. So I researched the background information and cultural context and wrote an article at Interlocals (in English). The article was then translated into Chinese at IN-mediaHK and spread around in HK independent media and NGO circles (Lam, cited in Hadl 2007).

The website used English as the "mediating" language as this was the most common second language shared by writers and readers. Hong Kong In-Media coordinated the website's development and ongoing administration. The site was 'semi-open' in that

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121 In 1996 Zapatista Subcomandante Marcos (2002: 111) described resistance to "Power" in the following way: "In any place in the world, anytime, any man or woman rebels to the point of tearing off the clothes that resignation has woven for them and that cynicism has dyed grey. Any man, any woman, of whatever colour in whatever tongue, says and says to himself, to herself, 'Enough already'—Ya Basta!"

122 The interlocals.net FAQ page (now offline) described the project as "facilitating cross-border dialogue on critical issues related to culture, gender, environment, social justice, peace, global/local politics, media movement, social movement and transformation." Original aims included dialogue and information about conflicts; cooperation; and mutual translation. The portal remains online at <http://www.interlocals.net >.

media activists around Asia could join as content contributors by being referred by existing members. The original site included stories and commentaries, letters and dialogues, and daily mediascapes, with content submitted from China, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Macau, Malaysia, The Philippines, and Taiwan. Content was self-categorised according to themes including Alternative Development, World Bank, Dams and Dreams.[123] Some material from progressive news sources was translated into English, other material was translated and republished from activists' blogs, and many original articles were written specifically for interlocals.net. An open translation agreement allowed website content to be translated and distributed under a Creative Commons license.

Despite this project having clearly articulated, collectively agreed upon aims, goals, and methods, within six months it had failed to gain traction with writers and readers. The translation work required specific linguistic skills which were not widely available within the pool of regional media activists (Ip & Lam 2009a: 4). Moreover, communication amongst local alternative media within each region often was not strong, and even when stories were jointly covered, these groups did not know how to contextualise their local issues into translocal or international contexts. Lack of time was another problem, given that grassroots media activists needed to prioritise local coverage. "Sustained dialogue across local social movements requires great effort in the explanation of social and political contexts," explain Ip and Lam (ibid.).

As the need for border-crossing work had not diminished, the coordinating group of the loose core network re-evaluated the project. In 2008 interlocals.net re-orientated the platform, shifting from servicing a politically-engaged general audience to supporting interchange amongst media activists and researchers, building a base for "collaborative research and activism" (Interlocals 2008).[124] Their strategy was to build long-term relationships and productive processes, starting with a book documenting the state of alternative media within the region from the perspective of media activists.

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123 The following representative article headlines demonstrate the range of subjects covered: *The power of internet to rescue slave worker in China* <http://interlocals.net.net/?q=node/123, *Hong Kong: Oppression of Housing Right Activists* <http://interlocals.net .net/?q=node/126>, *The Kaesong Industrial Complex and its discontents* <http://interlocals.net .net/?q=node/134>, and *Understanding the Struggle and Aspirations of Nicaragua from An Asian Perspective* <http://interlocals.net .net/?q=node/246>.

124 Although as of November 2009 a small group of media activists continue to use the site sporadically as a platform for exchanging independent news, very few translations are made, and few readers post comments. In early 2009 the site was redesigned pro-bono by Interlocal.net's web hosting company, Oursky.

Info-Rhizome: Report on independent media in the Chinese-speaking world (2008/09) is a joint book publishing project of Hong Kong In-Media and interlocals.net. Published in April 2009, the 130 page, full-colour book is available for purchase (USD25/38) in both English and Chinese language versions (Ip & Lam 2009a). This hybrid publication is also available as a free download and as an e-book via interlocals.net (Ip & Lam 2009b). Thus the book exists both as a commodity for purchase, and as a 'commonality' available at no cost on the digital commons. Its contents include an editorial note authored by Oiwan Lam and Iam-Chong Ip, three texts on alternative media within an Asian context, and four reports covering the "media environment (regulation) and citizen initiatives" in China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Taiwan. It also includes an Appendix of online media resources in these countries.

The book's title breaks away from the more familiar metaphor of grassroots media by deliberately referencing philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's influential meme of the rhizome. For Deleuze and Guattari the rhizome signified the "multiplicity, rupture and connectivity in theory and research," and this rhizomatic approach can be paralleled with the "development and status of independent media movement[s]" according to Ip & Lam (2009a: 1). The project did not want to duplicate existing technologically-oriented research on grassroots media, or, in the case of China, governance and censorship. Instead the book charts a course through the interactions between "media, civil society and social movement" via in-depth reports contextualising local independent media histories within broader socio-political frameworks (ibid. 2). At the same time the writers "situate" their empirical research within the more abstract sphere of "a specific cross-border Chinese community" aimed at reconstructing their experiences to facilitate mutual learning amongst "local resistance" (ibid.). For instance, explicit connections are made between the experiences of citizen journalists in the Hong Kong piers movement and those of bloggers working to save Taiwan's Losheng Sanitarium.

The book continues the work of the original interlocals.net web platform, drawing out commonalities of experiences under neoliberalism and proposing alternatives based upon collective experimentation, critical reflection, networking, and solidarity. The book's release coincided with interlocals.net's relaunch. It helped to socialise the technology of the web platform, giving a substantive 'slow' space to thought and cooperative work which the internet by its nature dematerialises and accelerates. By tightly integrating the aims and the functions of the book and the web platform, the projects' coordinators created a social flow which could pass through both media forms. These different avenues could engage overlapping audiences of not only media activists and social activists but also others committed to social transformation.

Just as new social movements are responsive to changing external and internal conditions, building upon the skills, ideas, and contacts of an evolving informal membership base, so too has Hong-Kong In-Media, along with its special project interlocals.net, transformed over time. Whilst the original aims have remained constant, collective experimentation and self-evaluation have refined the methods of achieving the goals. As the territory's main citizen journalism website, Hong Kong In-Media augments current affairs coverage and analysis with “socially-concerned personal and collective weblogs” (Ip 2009: 58). Its openness to many forms of participation expands the lexicon of social engagement and political action, and by encouraging people to step into the city's unfolding scripts it has become an influential locus of media and social activism. Early successes include the tree protection campaign, “counter-mainstream reporting” documenting the anti-WTO movement, and “agenda-making” work in the ferry piers campaigns (ibid.). In particular, citizen journalists used Hong Kong In-Media and other activist tools to transform the piers demolition issue into a distinctive “large-scale citizen movement” (Lam, cited in Hadl 2007). This “radical turn” charted the course for future projects which would knit “direct action, affinity network[s] and extended use of communication technologies” (Ip 2007: 3).

People seek “connections” to better understand the world, and arts and media are useful “connecting devices,” and an important “experimental agenda for the future” is to better combine these forces (Lam 2007a: 66). New social movements are responding to the need for people to become activated on an affective as well as an intellectual level. A key challenge for our era is how we can co-create a world based on dignity and the “formation of social relations which are not power relations,” says Holloway (2005: 18). Our individual “scream” of refusal impels us to find others who feel similarly. Collectively we engage in a “social flow of doing,” in which the doing is at least as valuable as the “done” (Holloway 2005: 24). Hong Kong In-Media, with its focus on action media, cross-border dialogue and projects, and a commitment to self-reflexive processes at every stage of a project, demonstrates how “doing” can manifest within the sphere of citizen journalism and nourish radical embodied intersubjectivities.

Summary and Observations

> ...as neoliberal logic increasingly structures the internet, new possibilities for resistance multiply.
>
> —Victor W. Pickard , 2008

The constellation of individuals who constitute Hong Kong In-Media consider media democracy to be vital to political reform. Social change could only occur by people

continually challenging a status quo marked by a non-representative form of government, institutionalised corruption, and an increasingly self-muzzling, highly concentrated mass media. Issues which concern everyone such as democratic representation, freedom of the press, education, and urban planning need to be vigorously debated in the public arena. Critical discourse enables people to think strategically by connecting localised issues with globalised patterns of power. Informational capitalism has produced relatively affordable digital communications which communicate effortlessly with each other: mobile phones, digital cameras, and the internet. These lend themselves to cooperative forms of organisation, open up access to niche audiences, and bridges into mainstream media.

Hong Kong's dot.com downturn had produced a class of suddenly unemployed IT professionals who became instrumental to the first "bloom" of online media with a "political consciousness" (Ip 2009: 56). Their timely collaborations and cross-pollinations created an appetite for participatory forms of critical creativity in an activist landscape previously dominated by hierarchical, factionalised NGOs and social movements. Discussion forums and BBSs were "instrumental mobilisation forces" for the 2003 protests and it was in this nascent period of digital activism that Hong Kong In-Media emerged in late 2004, some five years after the birth of Indymedia (ibid.).

Hong Kong In-Media's charter prioritised political and media democracy, a brief which extended to mainland China. This democratisation project articulated positions and mobilised actions countering material expressions of globalised capitalism and neoliberal hegemony. Consequently, it sought to build alliances and networks with compatible online media activism projects spanning East Asia and communities within the Chinese-speaking diaspora. Its deliberately non-aligned stance attracted many because of its inclusiveness of a spectrum of progressive political positions. Democratic media was rooted in shared intersubjectivity, and action media, a methodology which encouraged escalating intertwined cycles of embodied creative/artistic/symbolic action with online collective reflection, was a means to build the intersubjective space. This is the space for seeding and feeding the shared social imaginary.

Hong Kong In-Media's founders socialised the technology of the citizen journalism website by opening it to a wide user base with minimal editorial moderation. The emergent network itself encouraged an environment which valued equally investigative journalism, eyewitness accounts, critical discourse, artistic performances/installations, multimedia documentation, and calls to action. Participants did not need to be experts but simply needed to display the linguistic "virtuosity" which is the core productive force within biopolitical society. Dissent and debate were ways to move through immediate issues to expose underlying currents of power.

The staging of the WTO in Hong Kong and the spectacular drama the associated international protests would bring spurred Hong Kong In-Media to organise a conference on online media activism. This was also a chance to further experiment with the organisational form of the network, moving beyond In-Media's internal structures to connect with similar groups. Interestingly the impetus which led to the action media praxis came not from within media activism circuits but from the affective power generated by the Korean farmers' courageous actions during the anti-WTO protests and their involvement in collective post-protest reflections. This suggests that for media activism to be relevant to practitioners and audiences it needs to remain attentive and open to that which occurs outside of its own immediate networks and spheres of practice. Action media adapted aspects of Korean social movement praxis by insisting that there can be no objective stance in reportage, encouraging citizen journalists to enter the fray to become part of the unfolding scripts, reframe issues of concern, and complete the initial circuit by collective reflection. These iterative processes then recommence, informed by the new knowledge which has entered the common.

The campus trees campaign expressed the principles of action media on a small scale; by the time of the ferry piers campaign the stakes were higher, the public field larger, and the ultimate returns more positive. For although the trees campaign had been an environmental success, the university was the ultimate victor as it adapted to the new circumstances of obligatory consultation by refining its public relations tactics. On the other hand, although the piers campaign failed to halt demolition of both structures, people had been empowered by the sustained experiences of fighting for their city. Consequently, they took on new campaigns, frequently winning significant concessions from government. The accumulated actions of citizen journalists throughout the various campaigns has produced a “hybridised collaboration of forms” which amalgamates social movement and media models (Ip 2009: 58).

The post-Autonomist notion of the multitude is a smooth abstraction of an ideal notion of class recomposition, but the case of Hong Kong In-Media suggest that a real multitude is lumpy and unpredictable, a bad case of excema over info-capital's body. Digital communications amplify embodied actions, releasing them from the yoke of time and place, enabling them to work as immediately available inspirations that mobilise participation and build momentum. The experience of shared physical presence and telepresence creates transient affective spaces of solidarity. Sustainable social change requires hard work and personal commitment. Sometimes however the tipping points which trigger new dynamics benefit from the synchronicity and immediacy ICTs enable in combination with the serendipity of ecstatic encounters produced by the metropolis.

Chapter Three, The Container Project

I cannot recall precisely the first time I met mervin Jarman [sic].[125] Probably we connected in London in the mid-1990s via mutual friends in the media arts scene, a time when this small emerging field enabled people making artworks with attitude to find each other. Common interests forged relationships which would stretch into the future and across space, as people periodically met up at events, and hosted each other in their homes. A few art groups were interrogating the racial, gender, and class politics of the new technological tools and the informatised societies in which they were embedded. These ensembles built digital projects employing seductive interfaces which drew audiences into sophisticated social critiques. From my perspective, this was the most important work of that brief period before media art had become co-opted, sanitised, and commodified by a convergence of artworld, ICT industry, academic, and government forces—that bundle of fun branded the Creative Industries.

In 1997 I heard about mervin's plan to convert a shipping container into a mobile creative media lab. This lab would travel around his home country of Jamaica and through the Caribbean, offering marginalised youth opportunities to build new horizons. Like many others I was captivated by this vision, and followed its evolution from afar. In 2003 the Container Project was launched, and a few months later I met mervin and his Jamaican colleagues Sonia Mills and Camille Turner at a conference at the Banff New Media Institute where they enunciated the project's early successes ('Skinning our Tools: Designing for Context and Culture' 2003). In 2007 mervin and Turner spent three weeks in Australia as guest artists of Coding Cultures, a D/Lux Media/Arts project which I had co-curated.This intensive period of work and exchange enabled me to better understand the Container Project's unique vision, processes, methods, as well as the obstacles it confronted as it mutated into new forms and expanded into new territories.[126]

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125 The uncapitalised spelling of his first name which mervin Jarman (m. Jarman, pers. comm. 20 May 2010) prefers reflects how he sees himself in the world. The lower case letter 'm' indicates his “commonality and solidarity with others like him who had been described as “good for nothing wasters” (ibid.). For mervin, “my name is my art and my art is my life.”

126 This chapter's primary source material includes two formal interviews with mervin Jarman recorded during his 2007 and 2010 Australian visits; notes from numerous informal discussions with him in Australia, London, and Canada; semi-structured interviews conducted over 2006-2010; and my notes of Jarman and Turner's 2007 public presentations in Sydney and Broken Hill. Many of these talks were with small groups, ranging from art students, to Middle Eastern youth workers, to rural Aboriginal health teams. Some 2007

Part One of this chapter discusses how mervin Jarman's lived experiences, from his childhood in Jamaica to “hardcore” urban life and life-changing educational experiences, have driven the Container Project's evolution. mervin honed the concept and tactics of “repatriating technology” as a means to address problems arising from generations of poverty and its legacy of despair. His premise was that creative “street technology” housed in appropriate “social architecture” could plug into street culture anywhere, and the first test bed would be his Jamaican home town. Socialised gender differences and the escalation of criminal behaviour have impacted upon male educational participation, contributing to community disempowerment. Hence his target would be the most marginalised, those young men hanging out on the corner.

Part Two analyses the Container Project' techno-social processes, platforms, and tools. The materiality of the Container, a customised shipping container emplaced in the roughest precinct of the rural township, gives it a powerful social architecture. The project also manifests in electronic space, drawing upon a network of artists, activists, and hackers to translate the idea of technological repatriation into real digital tools. This brings us to the production of sociality and social space within the lab and its host community, followed by an overview of Container programs and local initiatives.

Part Three focuses on dimensions of specificity by interweaving historical, economic, political, spatial, and cultural threads. To understand both the poverty and social marginalisation many Jamaicans experience and also their tenacity, we need to

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session attendees invited mervin to tailor socially-engaged digital creativity programs adapted to their local circumstances, and in 2010 mervin Jarman returned to run intensive labs in Broken Hill, Darwin, and Brisbane. I have used a fair proportion of mervin's original words throughout this chapter as his distinctive style of expression transmits the spirit of the Container Project, and this is the first time that these experiences have been gathered together in one document. They are augmented by the perspectives of my other interviewees, all with long-standing histories of Container involvement: activist and journalist Sonia Mills, digital and performance artist Camille Turner, artist and engineer Jim Ruxton, and educational technologist Rohan Webb. The silent voices are those of the Container's user base, especially the people of Palmers Cross, whom I had decided I needed to establish face-to-face relationships with before requesting interviews. Sonia Mills (2007) has commented that she and her colleagues were “strangers, looking at the Container from the outside...seduced by what we see as The Possibility,” questioning why researchers are “more believable, or their views more legitimate” than program participants. Although ultimately I was unable to visit Jamaica, I intend to undertake future collaborative research in Palmers Cross. Recommending that I seek out some of the Container's “direct, and indirect, beneficiaries,” Mills (ibid.) quoted a Jamaican saying: “He who feels it knows it. (The good and the bad)” whereas “Researchers only SEE it.”

outline “sugar capitalism,” Britain's colonial enterprise built on transported West Africans' enslaved labour. This oppression drove the renegade Maroons' revolutionary role in resistance, and 20th century pan-African emancipation movement spearheaded by Marcus Garvey which continues to feed the Jamaican social imaginary. Garveyism, along with the Rastafarian religion/social movement are key to understanding the Container Project's deepest inspirations. The Container's Digital Storytelling programs and Artist-in-Residencies encourage cross-generational groups within Jamaica and its diaspora to recount their own stories, continuing a long expressive tradition by capitalism's “sufferahs.”

The final part of this chapter speculates on the Container Project's transformative potential. Container programs are hothouses of autonomous biopolitical production and interaction within the heart of info-capitalism, combining adaptable techno-social models, pedagogical methods, and experimental spaces. Those empowered through participation are people who traditionally have been ignored or exploited. Once emancipated from internalised chains, people have new choices including applying their newly acquired confidence and skills within the existing system or joining with others to build alternative circuits of exchange. Expressive cultures have nourished the spirit in the oppressed, functioning as vectors for self and political liberation. In a microcosmic instance of the post-slavery indigenous culture which gave the world ska, roots, and reggae music directly from the ghettoes, the Container has “mongrelised” technologies and creative processes in a transportable strategy for grassroots cultural activism. It has spawned the iStreet Lab, condensing the Container's social architecture, digital programs, and radical pedagogy into a mobile rubbish bin, ready to produce the common from the already common—street know how, pride, and culture.

Part One, Drivers

Recoding Poverty's Curse: mervin Jarman's Story

> ...it is always in the margins that prophets and visionaries appear, and from the margins that societies are renewed.
>
> —Barry Chevannes 2002

The story of the Container Project is interwoven with the experiences of its founder, mervin Jarman, and with the fabric of Jamaican culture in general. Two narrative threads contextualise the project. The first relates those aspects of mervin's life journey which directly relate to the Container's inspiration. The second is the subject of male violence in Jamaican society. In the case of young men, prejudice and lack of

opportunities has produced a culture of gangs, aggression, and violent crime, a situation further exacerbated by political machinations. mervin Jarman's digital art training at a unique institution in London called Artec binds these threads. At Artec were others similarly committed to seeding social change through the mechanism of art. From these encounters the digital arts group Mongrel was born. Their innovative, confronting projects propelled them to prominence in the international media arts scene, growing a network which would later help realise the Container Project.

Palmers Cross is a community of 6,000 people located in south central Jamaica, in the parish and south-eastern division of Clarendon. It is where mervin Jarman was born and spent his formative years, and where the heart of the Container Project beats most strongly. In socio-economic terms it is an extremely deprived place, embodying neglect and generations of poverty, like much of rural Jamaica.[127] Moreover, on an affective level, the place is distinguished by its long-standing reputation as "a condemned space," a commonly held view, as mervin (2007a) explains:

> Palmers Cross was the epitome of crosses....When God curses you, you bear the crosses. So Palmers Cross is a cursed community. It's been said that time and time again that nothing good can come from Palmers Cross, and that's from both within and outside. This is a subliminal code....I know this because I am one of them, one of the rejected, and sidelined, those relegated to the side walks and street corners of our time

A tolerated, or at least normalised, level of violence is one manifestation of this "curse," although this attitude reaches far beyond the Cross. Jamaica's endemic crime problem has intensified since the late 1970s when firearms generally became more available. In mervin's youth during the 1970s and 1980s guns were not so prevalent in Palmers Cross, with only a handful of "mostly home made" guns around; however, by the mid-1980s guns of all types could be bought wholesale.

The "extraordinary" rise in Jamaica's crime rate is "largely the handiwork of young males," and completely disproportionate to "their ratio in the population" (Chevannes

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127 Poverty is pervasive throughout Jamaica, and the poor are "more likely to be members of larger households, in female-headed households, have less education, and employed in the rural sector, agriculture or fishing" (World Bank Publications 2004: 51). Poverty is spatialised; the Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions (SLC) of 2001 recorded the incidence of general poverty at 16.8 percent, with rural areas reporting significantly higher at 24.1 percent (ibid. 42). Age is also a determinant, with 23 percent of Jamaican children living in poverty in 2001; they "account for about half of all people living in poverty" (ibid. 44).

2003: 215-6). mervin describes the culture of violence that he grew up in, in a town whose inhabitants are renowned for their ability to physically defend themselves:

> So you don't mess with people from Palmers Cross, partly because most of the guys have nothing to live for so if you diss them, then they're gonna diss you in the hardest way. Palmers Cross people don't diss for you to come back, they diss to keep you dissed completely, for ever and ever. We grew up with that, we embraced that as part of our survival modality (Jarman 2007a).

However, other more positive aspects to survival existed. These centred around a culture of sharing, of families stretching their meagre resources so that others would not go without. This is a class as well as a cultural phenomenon, as our later discussion of Rastafari reveals. The young mervin carried his mother's home-cooked food to neighbours, passing another child carrying a plate of food to his house. While the community did not have much, they shared "whatever they had" and that sharing and love was "abundant" (ibid.). This legacy is honoured in today's Container Project where collective cooking and meals are a central experience.

When mervin was sixteen years old his mother died. Although in 1985 mervin had founded a local community football club, earning him community and district respect, his mother's death precipitated life changes, and, like many Jamaican teenage boys, he dropped out of school. His new reality entailed surviving on the streets and engaging in anti-social, self-destructive behaviours. This younger self was a "bad boy who came up through the Jamaican rank and file," gaining a "hardcore" reputation which resonates even today amongst many in the local street cohort (Jarman 2007b, 2007c). The back story which mervin brings to the Container distinguishes the project from those socially conservative community-uplift models of social change driven by people who have not 'walked the walk'.

In 1990, the twenty-eight year old mervin Jarman arrived in London, continuing his hardcore street life, and then inevitably experiencing a "spiral of friends dying, going to prison, friends killing friends" (Jarman 2007c). At some point, mervin had an epiphany in which he realised that if he was to avoid ending up in jail or dead he needed to jump off the "perpetual conveyor belt of nothingness" (ibid.). At a friend's suggestion, mervin enrolled in the Hackney Community College to attain skills which would make him more employable upon his return to Jamaica. He learnt film and video production, and then computer animation so that he could enhance his videos. This introduction to digital media opened up a new world, untapping his innate creativity which in turn shifted destructive internalised assumptions and behaviour patterns.

Finally, the Palmers Cross "curse" had lost its power, and mervin began making "socially-engaged media," with the initial projects exploring barriers to technological access (ibid.).

As he advocated for other marginalised people, he contemplated how technological media could be utilised for "intervention," as levers for individual and collective change (ibid.). An instant love affair with the Macintosh computer led mervin (Jarman & Turner 2007a) to think about the "guys on the corner" back home whom he considered to be "smarter" than him. What would they do with computers if given the chance?

Art is about exploring the unknown, and it requires different kinds of thinking processes to those we use in daily life. As we learn to trust our hunches we become more fearless in our experimentation, and also more driven to master the tools which we are using to express our ideas. Transformation occurs on multiple levels: materials, thoughts, ways of being and perceiving. In mervin's case, his embrace of experimentation for its own sake implies a faith in organic social processes, that people are capable of self-directed learning and creation within supportive environments.

Kingston-based Sonia Mills is a veteran Jamaican journalist and social activist who has been involved with the Container Project since its inception.[128] She considers that mervin's instincts about how to work on a deep level with others stem from the way he changed his own life after experiencing an almost spiritual revelation. His insight

> into what makes people run (boys, in particular), his commitment to the Container concept, his day-to-day persistence, and his tolerance of things that don't happen when and as they should, are indeed the attributes of a convert, somebody born again to some new insights and understanding, and in mervin's case, I believe because of his own transformation, the CERTAINTY that transformation can take place (Jarman & Mills 2007: 90).

mervin started formulating his core concept of *repatriating technology,* which we will tease out later in this chapter. This repatriation is more than just "transferring" technology by teaching people computer skills, Mills (Jarman & Mills 2007: 90) explains. A penny had dropped for mervin, unlocking the "alleyways to places in his right and left

128 Referred to by mervin as an "elder," Mills (2007) describes herself as "Jamaican by birth...Over 60, mixed race (Chinese/Black)." A journalist by training who has written for print, radio and television, her forte is "feature journalism in the 'development' mode as conceived, and still practised, by IPS (Inter Press Service – the Third World News Agency)."

brain that he didn't know existed—sophisticated thought, intellectual longing, social action, stability" (ibid.). It was those things that mervin wanted to transfer to Jamaicans "by travelling around in a container and dispensing it!" (ibid.).

By establishing a small business in London in the 1990s, IANI Media, mervin Jarman had gained experience in bringing new technologies to people traditionally locked out of new developments at a time when few people considered the business benefits of having an online presence.[129] Although many businesses were "blackboned," mervin (2007a) had observed that they could not access or pay for the new technology because "they could not compete with the white companies." This was a racialised problem, with the "white constructors of the technology...catering for the white companies, the white high street businesses which could afford to pay their tariff" (ibid.). IANI Media's primary objective was to "ease the black community and its small business owners onto the then-acclaimed [internet] 'super-highway'" (Jarman 2009a).

His IANI Media high street experience made mervin realise that much "street infrastructure" needed to be addressed and developed for excluded people such as the homeless and drifting youth on the street (Jarman 2007a). Whilst by the mid-1990s places ostensibly offering public access to the internet such as cyber cafes and libraries were "touted far and wide," their architecture and ambience were not universally inviting. When mervin visited a "really kitted out" library and saw no-one using the computers, he concluded that many people found the space to be so "threatening and unwelcoming" that they were deterred from entering (ibid.). Strong social disincentives and spatial cues existed prohibiting "people on the streets, marginalised groups, communities, from interacting with the technology," factors which have class and cultural dimensions presumably not obvious to urban planners and architects (ibid.).[130] Another penny dropped: "What would happen if you stuck these computers on the side of road?!" (ibid.).

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129 The business name of IANI Media embodies a direct reference to the Rastafari concept of "I and I" (Jarman 2007a). In the Rastafari dialect there is no word for the plural pronouns 'we', 'us' and 'you', or the plural possessive pronouns 'ours' and 'yours'. Instead the phrase "I and I" is used, which has deep spiritual connotations, emphasising the individual's personal connection with Jah (the late Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie I, whom some Rastafari believed was an incarnation of God). "IANI Media" uses the dialect to connote something like "Our Media." See Honiak's (1998: 160-173) summary of contrasting views on the origins of Rastafari's "socially charged" dialect.

130 When I participated at an event in London's very geek-cool Cyberia net cafe in the mid-1990s there were virtually no cyber cafes on the average suburban high street. Since that time there has been a burgeoning of affordable internet services in the old international phone shops, and consequently access is less of an issue today.

In Part Four of this chapter we see how mervin's early vision for rewiring the High Street for the masses translates into the Container's latest offshoot, the miniaturised mobile iStreet Lab. We also see how the metaphysical concept of "the street" translates into various "mongrelStreet" projects. We return soon to mervin's London experiences at Artec and the formation of the Mongrel art group. Firstly though we consider the subject of endemic violence in Jamaican society, and in particular its impact on young men, for they are a target demographic of many Container programs.

Generations of Strangers: Social Construction of Jamaican Male Identity on the Street

> Took us away from civilisation
> Brought us to slave in this big plantation
> Fussing and fighting, among ourselves
> Nothing to achieve this way, it's worser than hell, I say
> —The Abyssinians 1976[131]

A key driver of the Container Project was mervin Jarman's aim to intervene in self- and socially destructive male behaviours. Although a detailed analysis of the complex relationship between endemic poverty, lack of life opportunities, and male violence in Jamaica is beyond the scope of my research, it is important to understand the origins of generalised despair, and how these conditions are differentiated along gender lines. A related issue is the role which gang-related violent crime has played in Jamaican political life since independence in 1962, which will be highlighted in Part Four of this chapter. This constellation of poverty-related problems are a consequence of embedded structural and systemic issues dating back centuries.

Barry Chevannes is an eminent Jamaican scholar who has researched the social construction of Jamaican male identity, offering possible pedagogical solutions to entrenched problems.[132] Chevannes' general analysis can be applied to Palmers Cross, explaining why its young men experience and perpetrate serious levels of violence. According to 1996-97 statistics, the majority of violent crime in Jamaica (including murder, shooting, and rape) is perpetrated by young males under the age of thirty years (Chevannes 2002: 50). The oldest individuals would have grown up "knowing the

131 Lyrics from the *Declaration of Rights* by the Abyssinians, an influential Jamaican roots band, whose "social commentary" along with that of other groups, reflected the "widespread discontent" in Jamaica in the late 1960s and 1970s (Bradley 2000: 265).

132 In addition to a distinguished academic career and history of public service, Chevannes is a leading scholar of Rastafari.

political violence of the 1970s" (Chevannes 2002: 50). Police reports categorise perpetrators of violent crimes as "unskilled labourers and unemployed;" Chevannes (ibid.) depicts them as belonging to the "army of males disappearing from out the school system at Grades 8, 9 and 10, ill-prepared for the world of work, unemployed" . These 'soldiers' form a key target group for the Container Project.

Gender-related social and economic roles in Jamaica are highly differentiated from a young age (ibid. 52-55). Girls learn that they are responsible for the labour associated with social reproduction, and their sphere of activities is spatially constrained within the bounds of the home, and monitored. The education of girls is prioritised when family resources cannot support all their children simultaneously attending school. In contrast, boys learn that they must undertake the labour necessary to support the household economy, a role requiring them to engage in the world outside, the world of networks and connections, the street and the corner. Boys are "trained to be capable, by endurance, of tough work," and corporal punishment is commonly used as a "means of 'bending the tree while it is young'" (ibid. 52).

As the formation of boys' gender identity is based on this "nurture-provider gender axis," knowing how to access money is vital (ibid. 53). A young Jamaican boy learns that "this is how he begins to 'make life' and earn the respect of his family, his peers and the wider community" (ibid.). A man who fails in the "imperative to 'make life'" can suffer a "crisis of identity" and subsequently engage in illegal activities (ibid.). A 1997 study of coping strategies found that "men are expected to 'make life' by fair means, juggling, or by foul means, hustling. Juggle, if you can, but hustle if you must....To do nothing is to be judged and branded 'worthless'" (ibid.).

The ability to survive against the odds is a virtue deeply embedded into Jamaican cultural life, and the main figure in Jamaican folklore, the totemic trickster Anansi the Spider frequently illustrates this.[133] In one tale Anansi "survives at the expense of his wife and children," and this tenacity remains a fundamental part of the popular ethos (ibid.). The strictly delineated expression of male identity for a Jamaican youth or man requires adherence to a "far greater moral imperative than the virtues of honesty and respect for property and even life" (ibid.). Survival skills are learned by "exposure to deprivation," and by "unsupervised exposure to the world outside the yard, to the street or the road, in effect to the peer group" (ibid.).

133 Anansi was the "only therapy for three centuries of hideousness," claims Marcia Davidson (2003), and his "cunning and scheming nature reflects the indirection and subtleties necessary for survival and occasionally victory for the Black man in a racist society." The spider's most admired attributes are his character flaws, a "direct link to the problems" Jamaicans face (ibid.). See Anansi stories in Beckwith (n. d.).

The street is central to Jamaican male culture. Whilst a young girl is "surrounded by a protective ring" which confines her to the home, yard and school, a pre-pubescent boy is encouraged to "socialise outside the home, that is 'out a' street', or 'out a' road'—out of the direct control and supervision of parents" (Chevannes 2002: 54). In the masculine domain of the street and road (village square), "males of all ages have the license to move about and socialise without censure" or supervision (ibid.). Consequently peer learning is the core of socialisation, as boys learn from and with their peers the "tricks and trade of the street culture, how to navigate the dangers, how to exploit them" (ibid.). A boy's peer group puts the "final touches...to the construction of his male identity—his anti-phobic heterosexuality, power and control over women through control over resources, paternity, and the importance of respect" (ibid. 55).

> The peer group virtually replaces mother and father as the controlling agents, or, if not an entire substitute, a countervailing force. An adolescent boy's friends--his 'spaar', 'staar', 'my yout', 'posse', 'crew', exact an affinity and a loyalty as sacred as the bond of kinship, as strong as the sentiment of religion. They socialise one another, the older members of the group acting as the transmitters of what passes as knowledge, invent new values and meanings (Chevannes 2002: 55).

In recent decades a divergence from the domestic "norms of the yard" has produced destructive social consequences, with the gun becoming the "ultimate representation of what it means to be a man" (ibid.). Jamaican society has shied away from directly confronting this problem, with neither politicians, parents, nor police willing to share responsibility for the creation of a "generation of strangers" (ibid. 56).

Despite their being under-schooled Jamaican males are not necessarily marginalised in terms of power compared with women, as they are significantly more likely to hold leadership positions within the general community. Furthermore, while the "high visibility of male youth unemployment creates a greater impression of marginality," in actuality more young women are unemployed but more or less invisible (ibid.). The "informal sector" absorbs "functionally illiterate males," enabling them to fulfil their roles as economic providers (ibid.).

The experience of schooling needs to be made "more attractive to boys," Chevannes (ibid. 57) argues, as the education system is a key to addressing violence. Education's aim of self-fulfilment is at least as important its normative function of being a means to an end (a better job or class position in life), a position congruent

with mervin Jarman's mission. Jamaicans have “neglected” education's “teleological function,” asserts Chevannes (ibid.). As education makes us “more human” it is critical to becoming socialised (ibid.). Socialisation not only arises from the interactions between parents and teachers, and young people, but also from the interactions amongst children and youth themselves. As this is a “never-ending process,” learning environments which strategically foster peer learning could transform negative dimensions of social norms and processes. Adolescence entails a “long period of liminality” in which meanings are made and shared, and so sensitive learning contexts which offer new cognitive and affective pathways could generate changes for individuals and, importantly, for the collective imagination (ibid.).[134] This theoretical proposition complements the Container's experimental pedagogical strategies, as discussed in Part Two of this chapter.

Radical changes to the education system could result in young male offenders being brought in “from the cold” to become active contributors to collectively building “cultural capital,” especially through the arts (ibid. 59). By “co-opting” male youth from marginalised inner-city precincts, communities could evolve “centres of recreation and learning” (ibid. 60). Again this vision resonates with mervin's practical implementation via the Container and its outreach workshops. Chevannes envisages a “transformation of gunmen...into creative and productive men, and the dawn of a new era of peace” for it is “always in the margins that prophets and visionaries appear, and from the margins that societies are renewed” (ibid.).

Ultimately, Chevannes' solutions to this gendered problem of criminality and violence cohere with the traditional community uplift model of social change. His top-down system relies on the cooperation of politicians, bureaucrats, and educators already occupying privileged positions. However successful grassroots models of education already exist, trialled by those who have experienced social and economic marginalisation and the destructive effects of generational cycles of poverty and crime themselves. The Artec program in London was one such pedagogical experiment.

134 Chevannes (ibid. 58) proposes a mentoring role for teachers who could help young males “enact the ritual transformation, so that the students who enter as boys leave as men.” This would necessitate broadening the concept of education, curriculum changes, and “co-curricular education.” Formal secondary school graduation would signify to the youth, their parents, and their communities their “ritual re-integration into the community as men.”

Artec: a Radical Approach to Digital Literacy in London

Artec (Arts Technology Centre) was a radical digital education centre.[135] Established in 1990 by arts entrepreneur Frank Boyd and auspiced through the Islington Council, the centre drew its cohort of students from those categorised as long-term unemployed. As Britain's "first vocational training course in multimedia design," Artec aimed to place its graduates in key creative positions in the nascent and highly lucrative multimedia sector (Boyd 1998; *Creative Industries Mapping Document 1998*). Graduates possessed the precise technical and problem-solving skills urgently required by an industry whose hub was London, and hence 80 per cent either were immediately employed or formed their own production companies following graduation (Jenkins 1997). The "elusive quality of 'creativity'" carried a high degree of currency within the multimedia industry, noted researcher Lisa Haskel (1995), who identified Artec as an important supplier of "new blood to the industry."

However, the students were more than potential members of a nascent precariat waiting to join the "assembly line of networked production" in the "factory of unhappiness" as post-Autonomist Bifo (2010) now describes the state of info-capitalism. Artec was educating these "young misfits" during a critical phase of London's emergent media art scene marked by cross-pollination of ideas and collaboration in self-organised projects, argues Armin Medosch (2003).[136] All in all, it was an energising creative context for those undertaking the intensive one-year course covering graphic design, digital video and sound production and post-production, multimedia authoring, and industry placements.

Artec had a radical edge, and employed artists (rather than software trainers) as teachers. One artist/teacher was Graham Harwood, and students included mervin Jarman and Richard Pierre-Davis, a Londoner with Trinidadian-Tobagon heritage. It was a meeting of kindred spirits, and along with the London-based Japanese graphic designer Matsuko Yokokoji, in 1995 the four would form "one of Britain's serious phenomena," the digital arts collective Mongrel, as detailed in Part Four of this chapter (Diamond 2002 :4).[137]

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135 Between August to December in 1997 I was a visiting artist-in-residence at Artec, and also lodged with an Artec student in a nearby housing estate, giving me the full 24/7 experience.

136 At this time Lisa Haskel ran a digital culture conferences series at the Institute of Contemporary Art, the Backspace digital media lab was founded, software art group I/O/D published a floppy disk magazine which evolved into a net art work, and Andy Cameron and Richard Barbrook from the Hypermedia Research Centre, wrote an influential essay entitled 'The Californian Ideology' critiquing the internet's commodification (Medosch 2003).

As an Artec student mervin Jarman was interacting with technology when the supposedly egalitarian internet, propelled by the World Wide Web phenomenon, was beginning to take off. Yet as a Black Jamaican man in Britain already facing prejudice and disadvantage, mervin discovered comparable issues in cyberspace.[138] Others of Artec's sixteen students also experienced exclusion. Although technology had been a "life-changing experience" for mervin (Jarman 2007d), when he browsed the net he could not find himself. This invisibility provoked him to start a campaign highlighting how he and other marginalised people could use digital media to change the face of that media by placing online the experiences which they themselves confronted daily.[139]

The Artec experience of an artist-driven, radical educational environment had "transformed" mervin and his colleagues, according to Sonia Mills (pers. comm. 17 September 2007). Multimedia had "activated a 'hot spot'" in mervin's head," triggering his belief that "other young/old people, particularly young men" could experience a similar liberation (ibid.). It had taken mervin months to cease worrying about breaking Artec's computer as he could not afford to replace it. After passing through the "fear threshold," he realised that technological culture in its entirety was "slanted against marginalised people" (Jarman 2007e). Change would need to come from below, and so mervin (Jarman 2007d) planned to return home and "give something back," starting with his "comfort zone," those young men similar to his youthful self. The street would

137 As Sara Diamond was the exceptionally proactive Artistic Director of the Banff New Media Institute for many years, she had a unique perspective on the international media arts scene and the contribution specific groups have played. See also Pierre-Davis (n. d.) for an insider's account of Mongrel's formation.

138 The racialised aspects of technological development and uptake, and the normalisation of whiteness in the cyber realms, are disregarded or downplayed by technology pundits and researchers. The *Undercurrents* (2010) mailing list is a rare example debating these issues. According to the meta-research site 'World Internet Usage Statistics News and World Population' (2010) between 2000 and 2010 internet usage in the African continent has increased by 2,357.3 % as compared with North America's growth rate of 146.3 %, a growth trend replicated across Asia, the Middle East, and South America. Yet "whitewashed mass media discourse continues to associate the Net with a Western and particularly American worldview and an ultra-libertarian, anti-socialist political programme. The ingrained assumption of a non-gendered, non-ethnically defined cyberspace automatically makes cyberspace 'white', a colour blindness that is inherently racist." (Medosch 2005: 225-6).

139 The subject of one project by mervin explored the circumstances of Jamaican Joy Gardner's death, contrasting the "free flow of information...with border technologies... designed to control the influx of people" (Medosch 2005: 233). Gardener was killed at home but was reported to have died in hospital, her death the result of immigration officers raiding her home to execute an invalid deportation warrant (m. Jarman, pers. comm. 24 May 2010).

be the focus of his intervention, the place where a “sincerity of the interaction” existed, where trust could be earned (ibid.). In 1999 the mongrelStreet subsidiary was launched, to produce projects for “street youth around the world.”

Although mervin Jarman's pathway through Hackney Community College, Artec, I and I Media, Mongrel, and mongrelStreet had propelled him into an international digital arts arena, his passion “never left the streets” and the disenfranchised wherever they existed (Jarman 2009a). The Container Project would be a means of “repatriating technology,” and a core goal was to deliver free “mobile access space to new technology for marginalised urban and rural communities linking them to their heritage and cultural backbone” (Jarman 2004a). Some theoretical frameworks, including post-Autonomism, tend to treat the material qualities of digital technology as independent from the power relations which produce it. However, mervin Jarman and others who were pushing the creative potentials of the new tools at a particularly dynamic time in the history of multimedia and the internet experienced how the digital reproduced and compounded class, race and gender inequities. To have any kind of social effect, the worthy concept of “technological repatriation” needed to be made manifest through material architectures and social programs.

Part Two, Process and Platforms

Repatriating Technology

> Some will now speak of repatriation as a spiritual journey rather than an absolute physical one. A spiritual journey in that it is incumbent on every black person, this kind of repatriation.
>
> —Barry Chevannes, 2005

When mervin hauled the Container into Palmers Cross in 2003, it was accompanied by a small band of artists and computer techies who would transform the shipping unit into a multimedia laboratory. Just the idea of the digital media inside the box sparked curiosity within a community accustomed to having nothing. This initial affective impact would later be built upon, setting in motion profound social changes.

The Container is a “metaphor” inverting the old relations of industrial capitalism between coloniser and the colonised (Jarman 2004c: 2). The shipping container which once transported Caribbean produce to the developed world, could now “'repatriate' technology into these islands, bridging both the economic and the digital divide” (ibid.). The concept came from a British perspective where people were “excited by

you because of the technology" (Jarman 2007a). mervin intuited that technology could ignite enthusiasm outside of traditional spaces of power and privilege. Repatriation could be reciprocal, "fostering the creative abilities of Jamaicans and continuing to distribute our values like we have done in the UK over the last 50 years," whilst Britain and Europe "feed back their technological skills into Jamaica to help sustain the culture clash that is contemporary mongrel culture" (Mute Editor 2004). The "repatriation of a tool," could force the powerful to "notice those whom they have not paid any attention to over the years" (m. Jarman, pers. comm. 19 March 2007). Technology could leverage change along the social spectrum, changing attitudes and opportunities by tapping into local histories and sparking collective imaginations.

The concept of repatriation has a particular resonance for those dispossessed from their homelands, their *patria*, by imperialism or colonialism. The European and British slave trades had dispossessed millions of West Africans, and for centuries many enslaved people fought both for liberation and repatriation.[140] However, by the time they achieved emancipation many had transformed their vision to a spiritual rather than actual repatriation to Africa, as the notion of the continent was now partially constituted by its transglobal diaspora. Africa was the world. In an Afro-Caribbean context the word repatriation connotes both mass suffering, and also redemption through persistent collective action. The distinctive phrase "Repatriating Technology" was painted on the shipping container during its transformation into a media lab. From the outset the project's physical form signalled that this was a space of liberation for those identifying as *sufferahs* (sufferers).

The Container Project can be promoted to potential sponsors and partners as repatriating the benefits of the global North to the global South. More importantly however, the project repatriates people back into their community who have been excluded because of their reputations and associations. The project also repatriates survival skills, from functional literacy to preparing a meal. Previously ingrained "anti-social behaviours" are replaced by a growing "camaraderie" (ibid.).

> People are learning to cook because guess what, we need food and you alone have nothing. "You can't cook"? "No, bredrin." "Well, take the food and cook it. Learn to cook. Anything you cook we will eat it. Nobody no criticise you, nobody no undervalue your contribution." We just allow people to contribute. That has been pivotal to the whole developmental acceptance of the Container as a project (m. Jarman, pers. comm. 19 March 2007).

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140 The establishment of the African state of Liberia in the 19th century materialised this ideal.

Sonia Mills (Jarman & Mills 2007: 87) describes mervin as repatriating “'social technology'” from Britain to Jamaica. The “sophisticated thought, intellectual longing, social action, stability” triggered by his London experiences, required mervin to look beyond Britain's evident racism and “buy into” some of the society's core values such as “cordiality, courtesy, honoring commitments—including time, respect, social responsibility” (S. Mills 2007). These values have contributed to nurturing a culture of “generosity and patience and social responsibility” at the Container (ibid.). Although this dynamic seems “quite subliminal and intuitive,” the space is no “yoga centre” but “very much a Jamaican yard!” For you Freire-ites, says Mills (ibid.), “it is practised *conscientisation* (ibid., emphasis in original).

It is important to note that the Container's goal of repatriation—technological and social, was obstructed by institutional scepticism, underpinned by a class and racial prejudice. There was a lack of political support from funding agencies, perhaps because the grassroots project was perceived as “diminishing their power” (Jarman & Mills 2007: 92). “Although widely hailed as the height of genius in its conception....not much more than lip service has been paid to the project by most,” reports mervin (ibid.). “Could it be that giving full-on support to the project would mean acknowledging that the system has failed us ‘the bugeyaga ragamuffins’ in the street?”, he queries. This is a problem shared by many radical cultural initiatives the world over when they seek state support for ambitious projects challenging the status quo. And if in receipt of funding, what compromises are expected?

Support for the Container had to come from below, and here the organisational and social form of the network came into play. Individuals within a loose international network of artists, digital activists, technicians, and curators committed time, ideas, and resources, “shaping and redefining the process” and augmenting the original objectives with many “sensible plugins” (m. Jarman, pers. comm. 6 April 2007) Although many within the emergent Container network neither knew one another nor necessarily shared identical ideologies, enough social and political commonality existed to collectively propel a project which had captured their imaginations. In this way the Container Project is a microcosm of the growing tendency for new social movements to be powered by individual intuition, experience, and affect working in cooperation, rather than by ideology and program imposed from above.

Informational capitalism to date had done nothing positive for most Jamaicans. If anything, it had accelerated the exploitation of unique cultural traditions. Jamaica's biopolitical production, especially in the sphere of music, had fuelled whole new music traditions in the global North via the Jamaican diaspora, yet economic and social benefits did not flow back to the streets and ghettos of origin (Bradley 2000). By

repatriating info-capitalism's tools this situation might be reversed.

Ultimately, despite the hook of technological repatriation, for mervin this project was not about the technology, as technology was “just a tool” which he could use (Jarman 2007a). Rather, the project is

> first and foremost about the people. That is the subject of the Container...what the Container can do to alleviate the pain and suffering of its people. ...there are things that I can't do, but fortunately because of the network...I might know [someone] who can do something to remedy that situation....So that for me it was always about servicing the community, servicing the people (m. Jarman, pers. comm. 6 April 2007).

All Hands On Deck! The Collective Production of Space

> It is mervin’s spell which makes the Container what it is.
> —Sonia Mills, 2007

It took five years to accumulate the necessary resources for the Container to make its trans-Atlantic sea journey from England to Jamaica. Between 1998 and 2003 mervin and fellow Mongrel member Richard Pierre-Davis journeyed back and forth seeking financial support, but eventually mervin self-financed the project.[141] Meanwhile, Matthew Fuller had published an interview series with mervin Jarman in 1999 in various media arts fora, exposure which attracted some practical support, and over time the project gained traction and credibility (Jarman 2007b).[142] JP Fruit Distributors donated

141 In 1998 the pair launched the unmodified shipping container at St. Pauls, Bristol, during the Bristol Carnival. Later they ran two media art workshops in London, one at the Stone Bridge Park Community Centre, sponsored by the Harlesden Social Inclusion agency, and the other at the Northolth Housing Estate E8 (m. Jarman, pers. comm. 12 Sept 2006). These events created a buzz around the project.

142 For example, in 2001 Sonia Mills (2007) sought “some interesting, original and successful projects” to raise the profile of the Environmental Foundation of Jamaica. Mills (ibid.) and her colleague Marlene Lewis met mervin in Palmers Cross and both immediately fell under his “spell,” a phenomenon others have recounted. Mills (ibid.) commissioned him to create a “virtual Spinal Forest” using Mongrel's multimedia Linker software for a Green Expo. The underlying environmental idea, the reforestation of Jamaica along the spine of mountains which runs through the island, engaged mervin, who devoted 24-hour days to create and install the exhibit, and then work the booth. This encounter began a key supportive relationship, as Mills was a bridge into influential Jamaican government and NGO networks.

the container and funded its shipping costs, Redundant Technologies Initiative[143] sent computers, and SkyBuilders (USA) and ReSource (Canada) donated technical equipment (Fuller & Jarman 1999: 1). Eventually the container filled with crates of mainly second-hand computers arrived in Palmers Cross in 2003, signalling the commencement of the project's second stage. The initial plan was to attach wheels to the container so that it could function as a mobile media lab transportable by truck and ship around the Caribbean. However, the Container Project would remain permanently based in Palmers Cross as the community grew too attached to it to allow it to leave (Jarman 2004a).

The Container is located on Jarman family land with "family graves in the middle" (Jarman, m., pers. comm. 9 April 2007).[144] An undated press release (now offline) declared "This is IANI zone—the C+ zone—where we build our dreams on the grave yards of time—the circle is not complete until every living child has food to eat - exit from this mongrelStreet!!" By situating the project on family land, mervin guaranteed the project's independence from private or state landlords, and also welcomed home all those in the community who felt they had nothing. He was sharing his family land with his *sistrin and bredrin* (sisters and brothers) of the Cross, with the implication that they all belonged to the same family of humanity, a significant symbolic gesture in a community long riven by political tribalism and gang rivalries.

Rather than announcing that the structure was to be transformed into a "technology

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143 Sheffield-based Redundant Technologies exemplifies grassroots approaches to media democratisation. Launched in 1996 and coordinated by James Wallbank (2010), it only uses technology acquired for nothing. In 2000 they opened Access Space, billed as the "UK's first Free Media Lab—an open-access digital reuse centre."

144 The Jamaican concept of "family land," a customary form of land use, tenure and transmission" is historically associated with "the heart of the peasant culture of resistance" (Besson 1998: 53). In the "free village scheme" in the post-slavery mid-1800s ex-slaves could purchase freehold land which the social reformist Baptist Church had acquired from planters (ibid. 48-51). Former "slave village yards and plantation backland provision grounds" began to be transformed into "proto-peasant economies and communities" (ibid. 54). This "kin-based tenurial system" became the basis of the "customary institution of family land" which treats land as "the inalienable corporate estate of a family line" rather than as a market commodity (ibid.). Land rights are established via "oral tradition" and "all children and their descendants in perpetuity are regarded as co-heirs of the land;" a system of "unrestricted cognatic descent" that contrasts with systems of primogeniture (ibid.). Family land is a family line's "spatial dimension" that is not only useful for building homes (which can be individually owned and moved) but also for growing provisions, offering a refuge for returning absentees, and for burial spots for the dead (ibid.). This is a system "created in resistance" to plantation culture (ibid.).

centre retrofitted with lots of computers," mervin (Jarman 2007d) harnessed peoples' curiosity to spur their direct involvement from the outset. The foundations were prepared, the container hauled into place, and the manual labour began. The "Grave Yard crew" of labourers comprised some of the Cross's most disenfranchised and disdained people, typical "guys on the corner." Camille Turner (pers. comm. 6 August 2007), one of the Container's first artists-in-residence for the Boot-Up workshop in April 2003, witnessed people cutting and welding windows, installing insulation and flooring, fixing adjacent buildings, and coordinating the official opening.[145] The building site became a social space, as people came to look, work, or just hang out, with communal cooking and music energising the locale. The community's labour created "shared ownership" and " inclusion" because it became "THEIR space" (ibid.). Turner was convinced that if the Container team "had flown in with snazzy computers," the community "would not have felt that sense of 'We made this!'"

The shipping container's exterior was painted a vibrant solar-reflective yellow, and literally peeled open through the cutting out of large kiosk-style windows running along both sides of the structure (see Figure 4 on page 130). Similarly, double doors on both ends of the structure would enable its conversion into a temporary performance venue when needed. The architectural space was customised on the inside. Long metal benches with racks below for the computer server and hard drives were welded and assembled. Walls were clad with insulation. Local artist Junior painted a striking mural on a nearby wall, depicting a container as a cornucopia of multimedia technology.

Many funded media labs are hardware specific, reflecting corporate sponsorship or institutional purchasing preferences. In contrast, the Container lab has always been a non-specific hardware environment, mixing new, old, and hybridised machines runningthe three main operating systems—Microsoft Windows, Apple Mac, and GNU/Linux. Its initial complement of machines included four Macs, ten PCs, and a server. One machine had been configured as a Linux multimedia desktop.

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145 Jamaican-born Camille Turner (2007a: 95) was an emerging artist in both media and performance when she first met mervin Jarman and Richard Pierre-Davis in 2001 at the seminal *Race in Digital Space* conference at MIT in Boston. This landmark event drew attention to the racialisation of cyberspace and network culture (University of Southern California & Massachusetts Institute of Technology 2001). Mongrel's "down-to-earth" and "passionate" presentation affirmed that she too could have a place in the digital world. The men "spoke the language of the streets," and drew from their personal experiences to connect with "communities outside the digital mainstream all over the world" (ibid.). Returning home to Toronto Turner was "determined to make a difference" herself by creating an access point for other marginalised people to represent themselves.

Figure 4, Setting Up the Container in Palmers Cross

Figure 4: The Container during the build phase, April 2003. Photographs courtesy mervin Jarman.

Figure 5, iStreet Lab Comic

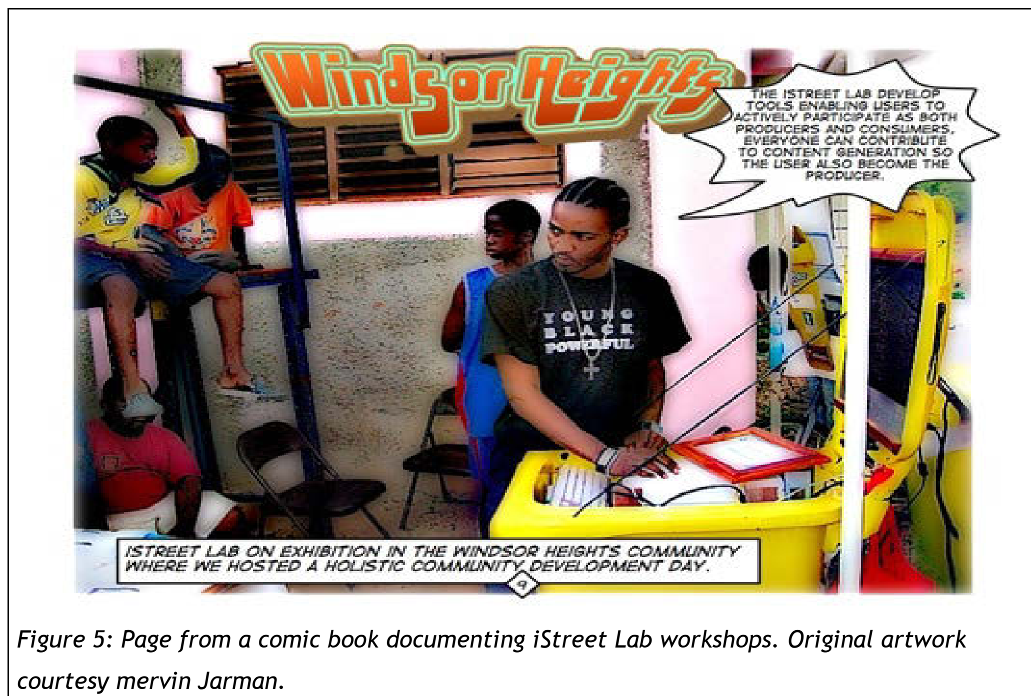

Figure 5: Page from a comic book documenting iStreet Lab workshops. Original artwork courtesy mervin Jarman.

In his online journal, environmental and digital activist Paul Mobbs (2003) from the UK detailed each day's labour, work which involved much tinkering with code, chips, and cables.[146] Assisted by local volunteers with scant experience but much enthusiasm, Mobbs set up a network support server, built desktop machines, and sorted problems with missing network cards and random motherboards. Assembling a functional multimedia lab out of mongrelised digital bits and pieces added to the buzz around the project, as Mobbs (2003) explains in Day 6 of his journal.

> The network server is complete! ...I can work outside The Container in the cool breeze, at the end of a long Ethernet cable....It was also useful because outside The Container, people found the computer more approachable. They could look over your shoulder, ask a few questions, and learn a little more about what was happening inside.

Lisa Haskel, a freelance media art curator who has been instrumental in facilitating numerous radical media and art projects, arrived in Jamaica on 22 April 2003.[147] Three days later in the midst of the construction activity she was running hands-on workshops, as Mobbs describes:

> Lisa's been working...to produce web pages with people, describing a little about themselves and the project. Using my digital camera they took pictures, which I then loaded onto the network. They then learnt how to mix the pictures with the text to produce a page. Then they can be uploaded, via FTP, to a virtual server that I set up specifically for people to host their creative work (Mobbs 2003).

This pedagogical approach is congruent with the "skill exchanges" proposed by radical educator Ivan Illich in his 1971 *Deschooling Society*. Illich (1996: 87) described a "skill model" as someone who "possesses a skill and is willing to demonstrate its practice" outside of a hierarchically-organised, institutionalised system of education.

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146 Paul Mobbs (2003) was funded by MAP (Media Art Projects) in London to help build the Container's electronic infrastructure and provide basic training.

147 Since 1985 Lisa Haskel (1998) has been a proactive organiser of public events promoting "discussion around the implications of media technologies within broader culture and to set media art practice in this context." I have witnessed some of the many projects she has coordinated, or to which she has contributed her network and software engineering skills, and regard her as a key figure in the London node of a loose international network of socially-engaged media practice. Her influence extended far beyond London, demonstrating the non-spatially bound dynamics of network culture.

This ensures that skills are not sequestered in bunkers of enforced scarcity but can proliferate abundantly, determined only by the interest of potential learners and the availability of "skill teachers" (ibid.). Similarly, the Container's "'training' methodology" encouraged people to "pursue their own interests and ambitions, calling upon the help of colleagues and professionals as and when needed," in contrast to the "shepherded directional learning process" that mervin had experienced in school, observed Haskel (2003: 66). The atmosphere inside the lab was one of "self-direction, experimentation and cooperation" (ibid.).

The hands-on attitude to DIY media, making do with whatever is available, was a powerful strategy to socialise the technology from the outset. It replicates Mongrel's workshops methods, and reflects also the Jamaican attitude to creativity which encourages making something original out of what you have (ideas, tools) on hand.[148] The chaotic atmosphere of the media lab under construction made people's first technological experiences informal, allowing fun to override the self-limiting fears.

It was mid-way through the lab's construction phase when Camille Turner and media artist Mike Steventon arrived from Toronto with more equipment. While Steventon customised some Apple media work stations, Haskell and Turner workshopped the video equipment with anyone interested, and Turner taught video editing using Apple's iMovie software. By that evening a small group produced a music video, an extraordinary achievement given that the technical crew and performers were people who less than a day earlier would have been considered digitally illiterate (Mobbs 2003).

The Container was officially launched on 30 April 2003, with community elders, local dignitaries, and children in attendance. The lab computers were networked via a LAN, as at that stage the Container lacked a telephone line. In the evening a digital slide show documenting the evolution from "from rough container and boxed junk to a function access space" was projected outside, during a celebratory party enlivened by a "really loud sound system" (ibid.). In early May 2003, mervin and the international crew put the finishing touches to the lab, and trained volunteers how to maintain the network.

"Radical media" is defined by leading communications scholar John Downing (2001: *v*) as media that is "generally small-scale and in many different forms" which express an "alternative vision to hegemonic policies, priorities, and perspectives." Within this wide spectrum of possibilities audiences become active "joint architects of cultural production" rather than passive consumers of commodified mass and popular cultures

148 For example, see Bradley's (2000) history of the sound system movement which originated in Kingston's ghettoes and has subsequently influenced popular sound culture around the world.

(ibid. 3). Both the material outcomes and democratic processes underpinning production contribute to a global "panorama of oppositional culture" identifying and resisting "multiple sources of oppression" (ibid. 17, 19).

The digital stories, music videos, photographs, interactive dance performances, microTV programs, and Second Life environments which the Container workshop participants have produced since 2003 fit within Downing's radical media framework. Here the cohort of guest artists, educators, and techies play an important mediation role, encouraging those whom have been negated and silenced to play and experiment with the tools, to see what happens when they produce their own media.

Clemencia Rodriguez (2001: *xiv*) has observed that when people gain control over a communication medium "drastic transformations in individual and group self-perception" occur. When people "recodify" their identity with the "signs and codes" of their own choosing, when they coax out their "shy languages" into the public arena, they create new ways to collectively reflect upon issues affecting them (ibid. 3). Such transformation which begins on the imaginative plane and manifests as self-produced media to be shared is a vital precursor to more organised struggles.

A symbiotic, dialectical, and acutely interdependent relationship exists between social movements and radical media, Downing (ibid. 23) argues. Media content which keeps social visions alive has a "slow burn" effect, lighting a "mnemonic flame" that might burn over generations (ibid. 9, 34). Radical media feeds into nascent and existing social movements, generating "new types of public conversation," and building collective confidence in the power to "engineer constructive change" (ibid. 31, 16). We might feel sceptical about art and radical media's potential to propel progressive change, but if we liken their processes to those of the microscopic yeast enzyme which alters its environment our conviction in the "generative power" of the small can be refreshed (ibid. 99).

The Container's guest artists and hacktivists might be likened to "communicator/activist[s]" following in the Marxist footprints of Antonio Gramsci's "organic intellectual[s]" (ibid. 15). For a short time (and this ephemerality can be a problem) these visitors become "organically integrated" with the communities in which they are embedded, sharing skills and ideas towards the development of a "just and culturally enhanced social order," rather than aligning themselves with a ruling elite to strengthen capital's hegemony (ibid.).

Social Architecture and the Copy Take Principle

> We have to move out, see new horizons, aim for higher things. If not, we are doomed.
> —mervin Jarman, 2007

The "social architecture" of the Container Project frequently referred to by mervin Jarman draws upon three reservoirs of experiential knowledge: how Jamaican society works in general, the specific social dynamics of Palmers Cross, and intuitively-derived experimental pedagogical practices. Within the Container context, social architecture and socialised technologies are intertwined to support processes and outputs which John Holloway refers to as the "social flow of doing" and the post-Autonomists frame the "biopolitical production of the common."

The use of a shipping container as a media art lab was a tactical choice. For centuries Jamaica has been an important player on the world stage in terms of global flows of capital, labour and goods, as will be discussed in Part Three of this chapter. In the modern period bauxite and sugar have been important exports; likewise food products, industrial supplies, petroleum, and machinery are key imports (Barrett 1977: 7-8). A shipping container is a familiar feature of Jamaican cities, ports and roads. If deployed afresh it could provoke people to consider what else Jamaica might export besides "sugar, rum and reggae," tapping into new expressions of creativity (Jarman 2007b). And as an "import vehicle" the container could transport the technology and "creative computing skills" from other countries to nourish this latent creativity (ibid.).

In the first instance, the familiar container form would be an "unintimidating point of contact for users" (ibid.). Because technology was "alien" to the community, "social architecture was high on the agenda" (Jarman 2007a). As computers were already an "intimidating set of tools," the design challenge was to make the space "less intrusive and less threatening" (ibid.). The kiosk-style windows were an integral part of this "deliberate design," a draw card inviting people to stand outside the Container and see what those inside were doing (Jarman 2007c). Hence, the windows were deliberately low cut two feet from the base up to suit all ages and heights. A long central desk supported back-to-back monitors facing outwards to the windows, so that "wherever you are around the Container, the screen is always visible to you." This "localised design" takes Computer Human Interface concerns beyond eye/hand/mouse/screen relations into the social field.[149]

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149 The success of this design can be judged from the interaction between people inside and outside, a phenomenon apparent in numerous documentation photographs (Jarman 2003).

This raises another important aspect of social architecture, that which mervin (Jarman 2007a) calls the *copy take principle*. Rather than building "tight cold cubicles where it's just you, the individual, interacting with your screen and everything else is secret" the Container's design "openly advocates" for people to "copy take," to look at "what others are doing on their screens, and then make copies of it on your screen" (m. Jarman, pers. comm. 14 March 2007). In the Container "there is no secrecy," and hence it produces a space totally geared for peer learning. The copy take principle reflects an understanding that knowledge is socially produced. It recalls both Freirean pedagogical praxis and also resonates with the notion of Ivan Illich's (1996: 91-97) self-organised "peer-matching."[150] Furthermore, the copy take principle connects with contemporary interdisciplinary discourses around open knowledge and open culture.[151]

Today's "hypersocial society" as described by Manuel Castells (2006: 12) rebuts the cliché of technology-induced isolation. Instead people can "fold the technology into their lives." Inside the Container, the open plan design enfolds technology into sociable learning situations. We can envisage the Container as a space of flows, literally and conceptually. Social and material architectures meet in the liminal window zones, where learning begins. Many Container users began as "observers from outside" who would "stick their hands through the window and touch the mouse" (Jarman 2007a).

> And something happened, that excitement, and gradually you get them to come and sit and start to participate in whatever programs we are running at the time. And that really opened up the social architecture of the space, allowing people to feel included and to want to be part of it because they saw their friends and they saw themselves interacting in a way that was exciting to them and they wanted to do the same (Jarman 2007a).

The Container approach to social architecture is holistic, combining community-

150 Illich (ibid. 96-97) presciently envisaged systems of open learning. For instance, he imagined people using computers to set up a "peer network" which would both break down geo-spatial barriers to participation in self-directed learning, and would give people a mechanism for comparatively rating professional educators. Moreover, he believed that critically-engaged use of "convivial tools" to "promote learning, sociality, community" could also contribute to larger democratisation processes (Kahn & Kellner 2007: 439). It is worth mentioning that mervin Jarman has evolved the Container methods outside of the radical pedagogy praxis espoused by Freire, Illich, et al, as his perspective has been informed by his lived connection with the 'university of the street'.

151 See, for example, discussions on 'Institute for Distributed Creativity' (n. d.), and projects under the banner of 'Open Knowledge Foundation' (n. d.).

oriented building design, innovative pedagogy, art and creative experimentation, and an eclectic suite of ICTs. Each of these four elements needs the others to ensure an optimum environment for transformative interaction and production. If any one element is subtracted the outcome could be quite different; the key lies within the dynamic currents running between the elements. Nevertheless, ICTs were such an unfamiliar sight within Palmers Cross that they immediately stimulated curiosity and a desire to play, affects which the building design, artistic programs, and peer learning strategies harnessed and built upon. Yet neither the technology itself, nor the art and experimentation, are ends in themselves. Rather, in combination, they offer the means to a number of ends, all of which centre on change—intrapersonal, interpersonal, community, and eventually societal.

Entrepreneurial Engines and Self-Organising Systems

> The new generation, the outsiders, the workless people, now have to turn their thoughts away from trying to outwit the machines and instead toward the organisation and reorganisation of society and of human relations inside society.
>
> —James Boggs, 1963

How does the social architecture of the Container Project support its activities? As selected projects will be examined in detail in Parts Three and Four of this chapter, here I outline only the general scope and organisational form of the Container. Each day the Container's media lab is open for ten hours, operating as a "self-organising system" with people using the computers as they need (Jarman & Turner 2007c). The Container serves an extended community beyond Palmers Cross with people coming from a few kilometres away. Portable recording equipment can be borrowed and taken off-site via an honour system; since inception no gear has ever been stolen or lost as "people are aware of what they will miss out on" (ibid.). Annual membership of the Community Computer Club costs $1000 Jamaican (USD 15), plus a small charge for hourly access for those who can afford it. This income contributes towards power and phone bills, and encourages collective ownership of the project.

In 2004 Cable and Wireless Jamaica Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Jamaica's second largest telecommunications carrier, sponsored the Container's broadband connection (and have continued this support). Immediately the Container established an Electronic Post Office and e-POB (post office box) as part of its "Community Network Programme" (Jarman 2004b). For a community who had been greatly inconvenienced by the earlier removal of their physical post office, the ability to communicate for free at their convenience was appreciated. Senders (and recipients in

affiliated communities) did not even need their own email addresses, as incoming email could be sent to the Container's or other hosts' email addresses and then “human runners” would print the mail and hand deliver it, a service the elders especially appreciated (Jarman & Turner 2007c). Technology fostered communicative sociality by enabling an electronic/human network linking deprived communities.

Broadband internet also engendered creative projects and cultural exchanges. Streaming technology enabled a conversation “between spaces separated by different types of distance,” testing what it meant to be “culturally remote in an electronically networked world,” and exploring the limits of and opportunities within “technologically mediated experience” (Mongrel 2006a).[152] As the Container participants performed their creations for peers overseas they had tangible proof that their endeavours could feed into translocal network flows.

Over the years the Container Project has nurtured nascent local community-driven social enterprises and micro businesses. Some of these “entrepreneurial engines” such as printing and desktop publishing services are run by the Container to help sustain itself. A bakery and a restaurant offer employment and training for locals, and future plans include the establishment of other small businesses including a flower shop on the Container block.[153] These income generators not only encourage confidence and self-sufficiency but also address an ongoing issue of people dropping out of training

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152 *Skint Stream*, for example, was a ground-breaking, intercontinental “Poor-to-Poor” internet radio event streamed on 8 June 2005. Spoken word artists and musicians in Palmers Cross, Johannesburg, London, Southend, and Toronto performed for each other using live streaming technology. The project re-adapted the “peer-to-peer concept of sharing on the internet as poor-to-poor; building upon the 'free-media' concept of new uses for technology that doesn't cost much money” (Foster 2006, no page numbers). This was a joint initiative of Mongrel, radioqualia, and ICA Cape Town. Although the original website is no longer online and the planned net radio channel never eventuated, a limited edition CD of an edited mix of the sessions was produced, and tracks from each node remain online (Mongrel 2006a).

153 mervin (m. Jarman, pers. comm. 29 March 2010) describes below how the bakery came to be, and, as of September 2010, some comparable initiatives are being developed:

> We have our own building in front of the Container that we fixed up. And a young man in the community who's interested in baking said, “Well I'd really love to get a container to use as a bakery.” So I said, “Well we don't have a container but the building is there, so you can use half of the space.” That is happening, he's doing his baking, hopefully that will employ three or four persons inside the bakery to do the baking and the retailing. But it also gives another three or four people outside the bakery a job, so they can take products and bring that into other communities and sell that on. So that now becomes an income-generating engine which proceeds from that.

programs because “they needed to be earning” (m. Jarman, pers. comm. 29 March 2010). The goal is for Container program participants to either be “earning from the direct participation or other things that revolve around it” (ibid.).

More than anything the Container Project is a “hub” which people “port into” from even beyond the local community, and from which many activities and experiences emanate (ibid.). The essential need for sustenance also is acknowledged, as food “takes your mind off everything else,” as mervin (ibid.) explains:

> No matter how depressed, downtrodden you feel, you get a nice dish of food and...afterwards the belly is full, then a lot of those feelings...can find somewhere else to go. You think how lovely it is to be alive and to be among your friends. That's why it's good to have food in a social context, to have people to share not only the food but the thoughts with, to enjoy that, and the Container offers that. A lot of the guys who come here probably aren't coming from a good social base, where they have parental safety nets, where you get to eat with your parents. They often do not know where they're getting their next meal from. So we can provide a space where they can come and eat and drink, everyone at the same time, and just having fun...just enjoy ourselves.

However, not all locals have come on board the project, and mervin identifies two main reasons for their hesitation. The first cause of self-exclusion relates to class, as “this is a culture based on 'class'” (m. Jarman, pers. comm. 20 May 2010). Some are “particular with whom they associate” and perhaps because “familiarity breeds contempt...that familiarity has made them contemptuous of the youngsters” (ibid.). The second cause is related to money. A small minority hang back because “they want to see how much the participants (their friends) will make money-wise because their interest is all into making money and fast money” (ibid.). Whereas the attitudes of some of the first group have changed over time, those of the second group are more intractable.

As participants in the Container's local and travelling workshop programs develop their problem-solving capabilities, technical, and artistic skills, some proceed to earn a direct economic benefit for their labour as producers and technicians. In 2009 a number of workshop participants were offered either regular salaried work or periodic consultancy employment contracts by local and national businesses. These firms were impressed by the technical proficiency and creative achievements they witnessed in a single multimedia art exhibition.

In 2010 mervin describes the Container as now being “mostly service driven,” with a focus on assisting the “new recruits...to become economically viable” as he is “on the exit podium!!” (ibid.). As a solid cadre of trained peer facilitators now exists in Palmers Cross and other communities, the priority is to implement programs to strengthen locals' skills in project and financial management. The Container Project's aim to be self-sustaining has taken longer than anticipated. Although UNESCO has partially funded the Container's technical and architectural upgrade, with nothing else in the pipeline the core team are seeking partnerships to “supplement the development of the sustainable plan” (ibid.). Because the iStreet Lab has sparked interest from the Jamaica National Building Society a possibility exists to bring additional partners on-board. Still, long-term core external funding remains doubtful.

Technological repatriation, social architecture, self-organising systems, and entrepreneurial engines weave together techno-social processes and platforms with transformative experiences. Although the initial concept essentially consisted of some catchy phrases and colourful diagrams, mervin Jarman's determination inspired others to trust in organic processes and commit to help realise the vision. Ongoing and periodic projects benefit from volunteer labour of artists, technicians, and local peer facilitators. The project has evolved into a network of nodes spanning many countries, with mervin Jarman and the physical shipping container forming a central ideas server.

From the relative simplicity of an electronic post box to the complexities of staging an internet streaming event, the Container Project aimed to be relevant to its people, demystifying technology whilst working on a subtle level to shift old prejudices and fears. In Part Three we examine how this project is unique to its time and place by drawing out some relevant threads interwoven through the contemporary social fabric—the impact of slavery and its emancipation movements, the evolution of a politicised diasporic African identity, and Rastafari. An examination of two Container programs reveals more of the indigenous Jamaican spirit of this unique social laboratory.

Part Three, Spatial, Cultural, and Historical Specificity

Networked Resistance: From Anti-Slavery Struggles to Garveyism

> Look for me in the whirlwind or the storm, look for me all around you, for, with God's grace, I shall come and bring with me countless millions of black slaves who have died in America and the West Indies and the millions in Africa to aid you in the fight for Liberty, Freedom and Life.
>
> —Marcus Garvey, 1925

Is there something specifically 'Jamaican' in how the Container Project provides opportunities and shares knowledge? Three historical movements contextualise the Container Project in terms of spatial divisions: the 18th century and 19th century slave resistance movements; Garveyism and the 20th century pan-African movement; and the religion and social movement called Rastafari. Moreover, the communicative aspects of these grassroots movements, and their self-managed cooperative labour, prefigure contemporary global social movements. Collective survival skills which require risk-taking and an inventive approach to everyday problems are embedded in Jamaican life. The Container Project harnesses these 'national attributes' to a globalised digital world, thereby forging pathways beyond individual survival into community self-sufficiency and social harmony, which in turn help grow new circuits of exchange. The Container Project's artist-in-residency and digital storytelling programs reveal traces of these three powerful historical narratives, playing out the ongoing desire for freedom and justice within a new territory opened up by the technological.

Jamaica is one of Capitalism's early killing fields, with the near extinction of the indigenous Taino, and misery and early mortality normalised in a plantation system. In the 17th and 18th centuries a British plantocracy class had established vast sugar plantations worked mainly by enslaved West African workers, whose labour made Jamaica the jewel of the colonies.[154] The plantation was both a “political” and an “economic” institution, a form of “capitalism with its clothes off,” and a massive machine interweaving the Old World and the New World through elaborate networks of capital, labour and markets (Williams 1996: 19, 24; Gilroy 1993: 15). Jamaica was a key

154 The link between sugar and slavery predated Europe's New World expansion, dating back to the Muslim era where “sugar spread with Islam” (Solow 1987: 52). By the 10th century the city-states of Venice and Genoa had extensive sugar plantations worked by enslaved Africans in Cyprus and Crete, foreshadowing the logic of modern industrial capitalism. For example, the Venetian Cornano family's sugar enterprise was an “international agri-business” in the midst of feudalism, combining “input of labour and capital from different places, processing output and selling the product through a distant marketing network” (ibid. 55). In the 15th century sugar plantations were “not one form but the form” of exploitation in the Atlantic colonies, and slavery “the form” of plantation labour (ibid. 53). As slavery was “essential to the rise of capitalism,” the State became an active participant in this violent system, argue historians Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker (2000: 28). English involvement in the slave trade commenced in 1563, sanctioned and materially supported by Queen Elizabeth 1. Yet the English trade remained “desultory...until the establishment of the British colonies in the Caribbean and the introduction of the sugar industry;” by the Civil War's end in 1660 “England was ready for commerce” (Williams 1996: 30). After the English defeated the Spanish colonialists in Jamaica in 1665, the island's 'plantocracy' was instrumental in the creation of England's vast new wealth.

node in slavery's triangular trade, contributing a major stream of capital which co-financed England's Industrial Revolution (Williams op. cit. 51-52).[155]

Institutionalised slavery drove the transition from mercantile to a proto-industrial capitalism in the 17th and 18th centuries.[156] Sugar was the first agricultural resource to be industrially processed before being shipped to global markets (Samuels 2005b). The English word 'factory' originally signified the jam boiling houses where raw sugar cane underwent a series of milling and distillation processes using early steam engines—the work undertaken by “highly skilled” enforced labourers—resulting in the production of export-ready commodities of manufactured sugar, and its by-product, rum (ibid.).

Jamaican slave communities had to be self-sufficient, providing for their own needs on collectively-run subsistence farms. This co-operative autonomy and making-do with

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155 An estimated twelve million Africans in total were sold as slaves. Africa was a “great field of flesh,” declared 18th century English plantation owner, financier, and slave trader, Henry Lascelles (Samuels 2005a). Lascelles promulgated a plan around London's stock-trading coffee houses to transform slave ships into a “floating slave factory” which would “revolutionise the purchase, storage, and supply of Negroes to the sugar islands” (ibid.). Enslaved Africans belonged to a multi-ethnic multitude whom European capitalists “forcibly expropriate[d]...from their ancestral homelands so that their labour-power could be redeployed in new economic projects in new geographical settings” (Linebaugh & Rediker 2000: 17). The slave ship was a “living, micro-cultural, micro-political system in motion,” crewed by people already dispossessed through the waves of European Enclosures who themselves had been kidnapped from cities and ports by detested “spirits” (Gilroy 1993: 4; Williams 1966: 10-11). In England, Bristol transitioned from being the centre of the servant trade to one of the key slave trade centres, along with London and Liverpool. Black slavery was thus constructed upon the “historic base” of “white servitude” which had seen countless “'white trash'” servants and convicts transported to the colonies as indentured or enforced labourers, argues the important Caribbean historian and politician Eric Williams (1996: 14-19). The slave trade's eventual abolition came about because slavery was no longer economically profitable, not because upper-class consciousness about the morality of the phenomenon had changed, Williams concluded.

156 English planters successfully lobbied against the monopoly of the Royal African Company, and by 1698 “the right of free trade in slaves was recognised as a fundamental and natural right of Englishmen” (Williams 1996: 30-31). “King Sugar” now reigned over his industrialised estates, causing the dispossession and exodus of small farmers throughout the colonies; this plantation economy had “no room for poor whites.” (ibid. 24). In 1700 Jamaica led the world in sugar production, and by the 18th century had become the “very centre of New World plantation slavery” and the British Empire's “most important colony” (Besson 1998: 47). Between 1700 and 1786 an estimated 610,000 African slaves were imported into Jamaica, indicating the enterprise's scale (Williams op. cit. 33).

scant resources is a pattern of existence continuing in contemporary Jamaica. For men, "survival" means the "ability to hustle, to create a living out of nothing, to beg, even steal" (Chevannes 2003: 230). Both genders must be able to "survive the odds," a concept evoking a "sense of historical tradition" (ibid.).

A powerful slave resistance movement flourished within Jamaica's mountainous heartlands for two centuries (Linebaugh & Rediker 2000: 194-5).[157] This horizontally-organised generative force forged networks for the flow of ideas, goods, and bodies. It formed escapee circuits, seeded wildfire insurrections, organised slave rebellions, fostered political agitation across Jamaica and beyond, created a "crisis" for the plantation system, and eventually delivered emancipation in the mid-19th century (ibid.; Williams 1996: 201-208). A new geographically-dispersed class formation emerged from these struggles, a multitude of strangers in a strange land. The "*anonymous, nameless*" and "*motley*" members of this "*multitudinous, numerous*, and *growing*" Atlantic proletariat (spanning Jamaica and the other slave colonies) laboured and cooperated to realise their shared vision of freedom, their "collective power" generating a "forceful energy" (Linebaugh & Rediker 2000: 332, emphasis in original).[158]

Following the Great Rebellion of 1831-32 instigated by the enslaved Samuel Sharpe, the collective struggle for freedom achieved a major victory with the abolition of slavery in 1834 (Barrett 1977: 38-49; Chevannes 1998a: 8). However, people now faced the challenge of survival, as many plantation owners refused to sell subsistence land

157 See Sandiford (2000) for an overview of slave revolts throughout the Caribbean. The demographic balance had always favoured the slaves. In 1700 Jamaica's population comprised 40,000 slaves and 7,000 English. By 1800 the enslaved outnumbered the planters and merchants by over ten to one, with 300,000 slaves to 21,000 English.

158 In Jamaica the movement also produced a culturally distinct group, the Maroons, comprised of Spanish-freed slaves, runaway slaves, and renegades. Maroon communities offered refuge for fugitives, and their permanent mountain camps perfected a form of subsistence culture "much admired" by English agrarian communists (Linebaugh & Rediker 2000: 310-11).The Maroons had "taken and defended their freedom and independence," and so inhabited the collective imagination of the still-enslaved as revolutionary figures, especially when they "forced" the slave colony into a "treaty of accommodation" (Chevannes 1998a: 1). They inspired the British abolitionists, Wedderburn likening their quest that of the Diggers and Levellers (Linebaugh & Rediker 2000: 309). Today Maroon communities and traditions continue, manifesting broadly from "herbal healing practices," to particular architectural details in Kingston shacks, to the reverence shown to the spiritual and military leader Nanny (Honiak 1998: 174; Barrett 1977: 32; Brown n. d.). However, some historians argue that post-treaty the Maroons "sold out" to the British colonists, and thus "failed to set an example" for subsequent liberation movements (Barrett 1977: 30-38).

plots to Jamaica's freed slaves, leaving it to the churches to establish a free village scheme that catered for some (Besson 1998: 48-56). Many of the dispossessed were on the streets, ejected from their communal homesteads and "kicked...to the side of the kerb," whilst a new form of slavery continued via imported indentured workers from India (m. Jarman, pers. comm. 31 March 2010). By 1860 some 200,000 peasants pioneered Jamaica's banana industry, yet by 1890 they could not compete with capitalist agriculture, propelling an exodus which began the Jamaican diaspora (Stein 1986: 20-21). Self-government was ceded in 1866 following peasant uprisings, and the island became a crown colony with an appointed governor replacing the elected assembly (ibid.).

How does this history relate to the Container Project? Firstly, the "brutal dislocation" caused by slavery reverberated post-emancipation. Rigid class stratification, externally-imposed barriers, and emotional damage have kept the mainly Afro-Caribbean populace impoverished and despairing.[159] Secondly, as Jamaicans consistently have had to "fight tooth and nail for everything," the acquisition of survival skills has been fundamental and the learning involved is inherently social (m. Jarman, pers. comm. 31 March 2010). And finally, Jamaicans proudly identify with the historical anti-slavery resistance struggles led by their forebears. The escapees established forms of networked-based organisation and cooperative behaviours in opposition to the extreme hierarchical logic of slavery and the proto-industrial capitalism which it enabled. Today many people around the world are experimenting with alternative forms of organisation to counter the new forms of exploitation and metaphorical (and actual) enslavement imposed by postindustrial capitalism. The Container Project is one such social laboratory, and can draw directly upon its country's history for inspiration.

The early 20th century was a landmark period in the fight for rights to cultural identity and cultural heritage. Slavery had created a vast African diaspora. The word diaspora connotes an "underlying unity in identity" even when an "ethnic/cultural/religious group has been dispersed from an original source" (Pigou-Dennis 2006: 157). Jamaican-born activist Marcus Mosiah Garvey played a "pivotal" role in "sensitising peoples of African descent...to the notion of a common identity" (ibid.). This shift in

159 Jamaica is considered a plural society. Around 90 per cent of the contemporary population are of West African origin, and the rest are of mixed heritage including European-African, Afro-indigenous, Chinese-African, and East Indian-African. Therefore many bear the psychological burdens of slavery's legacy, compounded by ongoing structural and systemic causes of continued poverty and related social problems ('World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Jamaica: Overview' 2010).

awareness was crucial if the diaspora was to develop a political agency which an international class of white elites could no longer ignore. mervin Jarman refers to Garvey as both a source of inspiration and as someone whom the system attempted to suppress because of his radical self-empowerment projects.[160]

Born in a northern Jamaican township in 1887, and later living in Central America, the United States, and England, Marcus Garvey initiated social and economic projects driven by the goal of Pan-African political unity. He combined inspirational rhetoric with projects on a scale of global dimensions—newspapers, workers' education programs, and the trans-Atlantic Black Star shipping line (BSL). His work prefigured the Black Pride phenomenon and subsequent militant Black Power movements.

Black "political apathy" was at its peak during Garvey's youth "due to restrictions on Black expression by the ruling class" (Barrett 1977: 65). Moving to London, Garvey's experiences with a cosmopolitan black community in London directly exposed him to Pan-Africanism discourses and projects (Lewis 1987: 44-53).[161] In 1914 Garvey founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), an organisation promoting economic pathways to Black autonomy (Lewis 1987). Subsequently UNIA branches thrived across the United States and elsewhere, attracting millions of members. Mass literacy, self-improvement, and self-sufficiency were Garvey's core goals; no vision was

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160 My primary reference on Garvey is Stein (1986), who notes the difficulties Garvey biographers faced due to the destruction by law (USA) and bombs (UK) of much historical material. She flags the dissent amongst social historians about the extent of Garvey's role in raising Black consciousness. My secondary references are Garvey (1963) and Lewis (1987).

161 The Pan-Africanism movement had been created in the mid-19th century by an "international black elite," who by the early 20th century either ignored or opposed popular resistance struggles, and "accepted colonial legitimacy" (Stein 1986: 8-10). Its precursor was "Ethiopianism," an "Afro-Atlantic literary-religious tradition" born in the late 18th century across the African diaspora that conflated Ethiopia with Africa, extolled its greatness, and "espoused a vision of African liberation and a future Ethiopian empire" (Adejumobi n. d.; Edmonds 2003: 34). In post-emancipation Jamaica, members of a "new social stratum" of thousands of medium to small landholders accrued money to educate their children from which a "black professional class" evolved, "resulting in a surge of black intellectualism" which desired other means of self-expression beyond the church (Bradley 2000: 70). With increased travel between the Caribbean, the USA, UK, and Africa the "idea of a World Black Nation" seemed possible (ibid.). The flavour of the emergent Pan-Africanism was distinctly liberal and reformist rather than revolutionary, favouring "progress" in contrast to the aims of black rural majorities who favoured "independence and self-sufficiency" (Stein 1986: 22). With "middle-class(ish) intelligentsia" favouring debate and lengthy written tracts, the "working classes became increasingly detached from the mechanics of change" (Bradley 2000: 70).

too ambitious, and redemption needed to be earned. Garvey's emancipatory philosophy countered internalised prejudices about Black inferiority. He was an "international leader of black communities on three continents," notwithstanding the eventual failure of his BSL shipping corporation, hounding by political powers, imprisonment, and other setbacks (Stein 1986: 89). Marcus Garvey's initiatives materialised the concept of a common identity, and therefore a commonality of struggles, throughout a vast pan-African diaspora.[162] Garveyism, the international grass roots movement he had inspired, gave this diaspora a political agency which energised and expanded the struggles against racism and colonialism.

Garveyism's "liberating philosophy" threatened the white elite status quo (Stein 1986: 109). His prophetic exhortation for people to "look to Africa for the crowning of a king to know that your redemption is nigh" helped seed the Rastafari movement (Chevannes 1998a; Edmonds 2003: 36). The "audacious" Black Star Line attempted to "function purely ideologically within a capitalist system" (Bradley 2000: 73).[163] However, Garvey also argued for a social democratic form of capitalism which would

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162 Garvey's projects, including the UNIA, the BSL, the Back-to-Africa scheme and negotiation of land from Liberia, his "seditious" and "proscribed" newspapers *The Negro World*, *Daily Negro Times* and *Blackman,* and the UNIA's Negro Factories Corporation—made an immense impact on an evolving "black, pan-African consciousness" (Lewis 1987: 81-82; Chevannes 1998a: 10; see also Bradley 2000: 72-4). He influenced millions with his concepts of "Black pride, entrepreneurship, and identity based on race" (Chevannes 1998a: 10). The development of the skills and professional opportunities of "New World Africans" was the key to all Africans' "economic advancement and liberation" and would create Africa as a powerful post-colonial player on the world's political stage (ibid.). So despite Garvey's pan-Africanism stemming from the "elite tradition of ambition and uplift," over time it drew in people from all classes (Stein 1986: 109).

163 In 1919 Garvey announced the opening of a shipping line to be funded by Black shareholders —the Black Star Line (BSL)—which would enable Blacks to "build ships and start trading with ourselves" (Stein 1986: 64). As ships were "pre-eminent symbols of national power," the BSL project resonated politically, garnering "an unprecedented show of black solidarity" from Black elites and middle classes alike (Bradley 2000: 72). It was a project which would "send a thrill to the Negroes of two hemispheres" in the words of Black intellectual William Ferris (Stein 1986: 81). By 1920 the BSL owned three ships, a feat which attracted 25,000 to attend the first UNIA conference in New York, one of the outcomes of which was the publication of a Declaration of Negro Rights (See Garvey (1963: 80-84) on the reasons for the ultimate failure of the BSL; Stein 1986: 86). Subsequent UNIA Conventions demonstrated "solidarity with other liberation struggles" including those in India and Ireland, and across Africa (Lewis 1987: 91-95, 153-177).

set limits to individual and corporate wealth (Lewis 1987: 70-71).[164] Marcus Garvey's unprecedented, and as yet unsurpassed, achievement was to "unite the black populations of the whole world" (Bradley 2000: 73).[165]

Garveyism produced a multitude, just as previously slavery's networked resistance movements had. But this multitude was more culturally diverse and spatially-dispersed, spanning Black nationalities, socio-economic classes, and continents. The internationalised movement self-managed modern platforms from mass media to mass transportation to accelerate and amplify the spread of ideas and affects. New circuits of exchange evolved, linking pan-African diaspora communities to their birthplace communities, to modernity's newly minted African nations, and to one another.

How does Garveyism relate to the Container Project? Firstly, it exemplified self-help and grassroots political organising which simultaneously manifests within localised cultural contexts and across globalised networks. Secondly, it prioritised self-education and communication, and employed a range of channels to raise collective awareness. Thirdly, it initiated and supported variously scaled Black entrepreneurial projects. Fourthly, it connected with other struggles across the world through solidarity actions and communiques. Finally, Marcus Garvey himself was a model of experiential rather than academic intellectualism. He developed exceptional oratorical skills to impart his vision, confronting people's internalised prejudices and society's entrenched structures of power and exclusion (Lewis 1987: 12-13, 77-80; Barrett 1977: 76-80).

Herein lies a clear link between the work of Marcus Garvey and mervin Jarman. For Garvey, knowledge needed to be "pursued" to assist liberation processes (Lewis 1987: 12-13). Aware of the immediate and historical circumstances of the diaspora's impoverished masses, he believed people could overcome adverse conditions "through their own efforts" (ibid.). Hence he exhorted them to "cast aside passivity and negation" and take charge of their destinies, linking self-emancipation, self-directed learning, and entrepreneurialism (Lewis 1987: 79). Like Garvey, Jarman is also a charismatic speaker, as is attested to by numerous speaking invitations, and his words are backed up by ambitious projects (albeit on a smaller scale) conceived as motors of

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164 See Lewis (1987: 124-151) for the relationship between Garveyism, Communism, and Marxism, and differences between their approaches to the internationalisation of struggles.

165 A Marxist feminist critique of Garveyism argues that it failed to bring about deep social transformation because its "all-class nationalism...focused exclusively on race," ignoring the "fundamental divisions of humanity...between capital and labour" (Turner 1993: no page number). Moreover, Garveyism was a form of "pro-capitalist black nationalism" that promoted a "male deal," premised upon "new precedence over women whose consequent subordination was essential to the preservation of capital's ascendency" (ibid.).

change. A shipping container rather than a shipping line, a street television station rather than a national magazine. Self-education, self-awareness, collective action, and a linking of struggles are goals both men doggedly pursued.

The goal of emancipation is shared by another uniquely Jamaican phenomenon, Rastafari. Certain Rastafarian core values and practices have influenced mervin Jarman (2007a), and consequently the Container Project embodies and reflects these.[166]

I and I Working Together: Rastafari's Production of Cultural Agency

> The philosophy of Rastafarianism, and the whole concept of I and I, is whatever is good for me is good for you. So I and I share in all things. So there's this I, and that I, and we work together. The food, the drink, the *livity*,[167] it's all engaging, all encompassing thing.
> —mervin Jarman, 2007

Rastafari has been described as an indigenous Jamaican religion,[168] philosophy, social movement, and world view (Chevannes 1998b; Edmonds 2003).[169] It incorporates a "system of beliefs and a state of consciousness," and although some of its activities

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166 However, mervin (m. Jarman, pers. comm. 24 February 2010) rejects Rastafarian theological beliefs, declaring that he has no religion. Therefore, Rastafari exerts more of a cultural (and possibly spiritual) influence on him.

167 *Livity* is a holistic concept. Paul Kelly (in Hill 2005) describes it: "Our education is through our livity... Livity's your way of life... The food we eat, how we keep ourselves fit and healthy..., and mental and physical and spiritual fitness, that is what we call the livity."

168 Core Rastafari convictions for some are Emperor Haile Selassie I's divine status, and the Black African destiny involving an exodus to the promised land, Ethiopia, that is, Repatriation to 'Zion' (Chevannes 1998b 26-28, 31). Repatriation was probably more important as a theological rather than political concept, given that few Rastas migrated to the land made available to the African diaspora by Liberia and Ethiopia (ibid. 30-31). The repatriation concept folded in broader notions of restorative justice in which Europeans would return stolen land to the Amerindians and return to Europe; it demanded the end of White racism and the institution of a new world order. Another crucial tenet is that God is Black (ibid. 28). From this comes both "a rejection of the hegemonic system of values" that elevates Whiteness and its entrenched power, and the conviction that Black humanity has a divine aspect (ibid.). These revolutionary cosmological beliefs were founded on the collective Black transformation Marcus Garvey prepared; Rastafari's early protagonists all identified as Garveyites (ibid. 29).

169 'Rastafari' refers to the broad phenomenon, whereas 'Rastafarianism' refers to the phenomenon's religious expression. The word 'Rasta' signifies either someone who identifies with Rastafari, or who identifies as being a Rastafarian religious follower.

have given it a "political character" it is more useful to consider it as a "cultural movement," argues Chevannes (1998b: 39). People manifest Rastafari by coming to consciousness, participating in a high level of intellectual critique of the dynamics of self- and external oppression. Babylon, a key Rastafarian concept, signifies the interrelated moral values, economic systems, and legally-sanctioned mechanisms of human exploitation, production and exchange of tainted commodities—all associated with a transglobal class of white oppressors (Hill 2005). Hence Babylon is the root cause of Black suffering.[170]

Rastafari emerged in the 1930s from Kingston's ghettoes populated by a dispossessed and disenfranchised rural proletariat, existing urban poor, and diaspora returnees. A groundswell of activity spontaneously arose from the severe economic and social hardship caused by inequitable government policies. In November 1930 the crowning of a Black emperor in Ethiopia, Haile Selassie I—whom some Jamaicans regarded as the promised Messiah—was the primary "catalytic event" which called Rastafari into existence (Edmonds 2003: 32).[171] The nascent movement rejected British economic and cultural imperialism, and promoted self-sufficiency and a righteous way of living. For the poor it was a means of expression which countered their disenfranchisement under Crown Colony rule. Over time Rastafari "carved out a niche for itself," becoming "embedded" in Jamaica's socio-cultural fabric (Edmonds 2003: 40, 4).

While Rastafari's early phase had emphasised Redemption and Repatriation (echoing Garvey's Back to Africa program) and had set up autonomous communities, its second phase (1940s—1970s) became increasingly politicised, incorporating traditional protests and guerrilla activities. Events both within Jamaica and internationally created a "very volatile climate" for people who have an "imperative to be free" (R. Webb, pers. comm. 8 April 2010). Although the movement expanded to include the middle-class of

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170 Babylon draws upon themes of individual egotism and societal corruption in the Old and New Testament and recontextualises them in a contemporary framework (Edmonds 2003: 43). Rastas use the word Babylon to express the "entire Western system, not only of oppression but of corrosion, the erosion of values...the materialism, the selfishness, capitalism and that search for profit over personhood...so that everything...that maintains and upholds this system, is part of the system of Babylon" (Chevannes, in Hill 2005). As Jamaica belongs to a global "colonial/imperialist complex," Babylon is "extended to the Anglo-American alliance, which has received the benefits of colonialism and international capitalism" (Edmonds 2003: 45). Babylon is also an internalised condition of the psyche; in Peter Morgan's words (Hill 2005), "Babylon is a state of mind, Babylon is confusion. So if you are confused in yourself then your own self is Babylon."

171 Prior to his coronation in November 1930 the Emperor had been Prince Ras Tafari. In the Ethiopian Semetic language, Amharic, *Ras* means prince or lord.

both genders, and those of mixed race background, it still addressed the suffering of those at the bottom of Jamaican society. Over time urban youth used their indigenous music forms to express Rastafari "ideas, yearning and critique," and reggae music became Rastafari's export vehicle (Chevannes 1998b: 14).[172]

At the same time Rastafari-identified youth became involved in national politics, and their vote helped Michael Manley's left-wing People's National Party (PNP) win the 1972 general election. Youth engagement was a means to escape the "economic and political hegemony that existed" (R. Webb, pers. comm. 8 April 2010). While previously "Jamaicans had seen the failure of many of their heroes" Manley's election as Prime Minister ushered in a "new era," in which some Rastas maintained a traditional expression of Rastafari, while others chose the "nation building" path (ibid.).

Rastafari's current phase which began in the 1980s is marked by less ideologically-driven youth, greater female participation,[173] and the secularisation of certain symbols. The movement "retains great moral authority" in Jamaica because it both continued Garveyism's liberation of cultural identity, and also placed Jamaican culture on the world stage (Chevannes 1998b: 16).

Knowledge, conceptualised as an "active, inward process" which "creates and re-creates a world in which internal and external are welded into unity," is important in the Rasta world view (Owens 1976: 170-171). Freedom is highly valued and is reflected by the absence of a centralised organisational structure. Rastafari continues to be an "acephalous" movement (Chevannes 1998b: 16, 31; Hill 2005). Nature is revered, and this is most evident in the traditional Rastafari foodways (or *I-tal*, denoting vital, natural, organic) which include various prohibitions of processed, artificial or unclean

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172 Reggae is Jamaica's most significant contribution to world culture, and Rastas' primary "anti-Babylon musical weapon" (Edmonds 2003: 51). This "liminal music" is a "medium of social commentary," expressing themes such as "oppression in exile," and yearning for home (Barrett 1977: *ix*). The concept of Babylon is central to many songs as Edmonds (ibid. 46-51) demonstrates through his analysis of Bob Marley's lyrics. "Reggae is a weapon of revolution because of the power of art," and also because of "the power of capitalist communication technology," claims Turner (1993). "Reggae cannot be banned, censored or repressed because audio cassettes and duplication are available to everyone" (ibid.). Kingston-based dub poet, Mutabaruka (in Hill 2005), claims that it is "political" to "use the music" and "whatsoever is necessary, to propagate this philosophy."

173 Within Rastafari's "strong patriarchal tradition" Rasta women were regarded as having a "natural inferiority," and excluded from participating in many rituals (Chevannes 1998b: 37). Terisa E. Turner (1993) argues from a neo-Marxist feminist perspective that if Rastafari is to be a "fertile social force for the 21st century" it must affirm that "class consciousness cannot exist without gender consciousness."

foods, alcohol, and most drugs except the sacramental marijuana (Chevannes 1998b: 18, 35; Honiak 1998: 142-151; Edmonds 2003: 60-62).

Rastafari, like slavery's resistance movements and Garveyism, engaged people's imaginations with visions of a transformed reality countering centuries of Babylonian oppression. Resistance took up cultural arms, using the power of the word, especially through music. In Rastafari, more so than in the preceding movements, the expressive arts played a fundamental role in transmitting the possibility of of hope, redemption, and transformation.

Rastas share with Jamaican peasant culture a "predilection...for the spoken word," and moreover, for "big words," a linguistic tradition that both literate and non-literate follow (Chevannes 1998b: 36). Consequently, Jamaica's contemporary culture is "essentially oral" (ibid.). The "philosophical and political astuteness" within Rastafari stems from collective analysis of socio-political and historical circumstances (Barrett 1977: 65).[174] Sources of "inspiration" extend past the Bible to the "interpretation of current events," argues Chevannes (in Hill 2005). As Rastas interpret their beliefs through current activities, they seek to fit something like a computer chip "into the whole belief structure" (ibid.). Herein lies a clue as to how the Container's aim of "repatriating technology" might resonate with Palmers Cross's Rastas. Slavery's triangular trade is turned on its head as Babylon's latest wares, bearing the historical legacy of a capitalist system exploiting the labour of the enslaved, are returned to their descendants who can deploy them to challenge Babylon's hegemony.

mervin Jarman (2007a) states he was a "Rasta from birth" because he was born, grew up, and still exists "in poverty," and had been "persecuted" for his race and social standing. After the abolition of slavery, lack of "clear pathways" created a "devastated" mass of people who began to "go astray." A society with many social divisions evolved in which "everybody a-pull for themselves"; these divisions also included the cliques within the church and state (ibid.). The Container Project offers an antidote to these old wounds through being "all-inclusive."

Most Jamaicans value visions, believing them to be divine messages transmitted to individuals through dreams "rich in symbolic meanings" (Chevannes 1998b: 35). mervin's vision announced that he and his community needed to "emancipate" themselves from the "doomsday situation" they had long inhabited (ibid.). His

174 Intellectual critique occurs via the tradition of group discussions or "long reasoning sessions," and through cultural forms, especially music. Rastafarians are Jamaica's "social catalysts" transporting the lived conditions of the poor into the "living rooms of the rich" (Barrett 1977: 186, 174).

interpretation of Rastafari's concept of "I and I" is that by working together people create mutual benefits. Just as Jamaica's problems are complex, the solutions must be holistic, engaging not only the mind, but the senses and the emotions. A starting point was to port in not only Babylon's technology, but also a cohort of artists and imaginative technicians to exchange their realities.

Discovering Your Voice: The Container's Artist-in-Residency Programs

> We had no voice, we had no presence, we were just part of somebody else's power structure.
>
> —Michael Manley, 2001

While the Container Project positions itself within the realm of experimental art and digital creativity, it can also be considered as a vehicle for the application of Freirean principles of critical literacy. The Digital Storytelling Program facilitated by visiting artists and media activists is social activism, imparting basic skills and encouraging artistic experimentation to not only produce digital artefacts and experiences but, more importantly, to stimulate critical thinking and desire for change. Workshop leaders use various pedagogical methods to hone ideas and narrative skills. The periodic programs typically last between one week to one month, depending on the availability of guest facilitators and external funding.[175]

The residency program encourages technological eclecticism, with artists using and teaching both proprietary software programs plus versatile tools and operating system distributions made by artists and hacktivists.[176] The early workshops used programs such

175 Visiting artists are sometimes funded by their own governments, and UNESCO has sponsored some programs. For example, the Canada Council for the Arts has funded Turner and Ruxton's Jamaica workshops because they deemed it important for Canadian artists to "interface" with the Container as it is an "emerging art practice outside the box" (Turner 2007b).

176 For instance, some Container computers run dyne:bolic, a version of the GNU/Linux operating system distributed with a suite of free software tools for multimedia authoring and streaming media. Developed by Jaromil (2010) and a network of activist programmers, dyne:bolic is tailored for old computers with slow processors and not much RAM, and is "widely used around the world, especially in the South!" Jaromil (n. d.), who is an active contributor to many radical software discourses, Hack Labs, and programming projects, frames dyne:bolic as "Rasta software":

> Jah Rastafari Livity bless our Freedom! ...This software is about Resistance in a Babylon world which tries to control more and more the way we communicate and we share information and knowledge. This software is for all those who cannot afford to have the

as Mongrel's Linker,[177] whereas more recently there has been a tendency to use proprietary applications, especially those which come bundled with Apple Mac computers (the laptop brand used in the iStreet labs). One might speculate that artist-made tools allowing people ('amateurs') to "produce fast artefacts of digital culture with other mongrels" paved the way for corporations to develop proprietary 'non-professional' but powerful tools such as iComic, iMovie, and GarageBand (Mongrel 1998). Linker and comparable free software programs demonstrated that 'ordinary people' will enthusiastically embrace user-friendly tools.

Container members collaborate with various cultural activist groups and educators to customise digital tools and co-develop pedagogical methods to be beta-tested in Container workshops, and later distributed throughout a nascent network of Caribbean media centres and beyond.[178] In contrast to commercial software development,

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> latest expensive hardware to speak out their words of consciousness and good will... [F]reedom and sharing of knowledge are solid principles for evolution, and that's where this software comes from... The roots of Rasta culture can be found in Resistance to slavery. This software is not a business. This software is free as of speech and is one step in the struggle for Redemption and Freedom (Jaromil n. d.).

See also Medosch (2005).

177 Mongrel's Linker program was one of the first manifestations of social software: it was built in direct response to user needs, those people excluded from the techno-future, "our own people" as mervin puts it (Fuller, 1999a). Mongrel built Linker by reverse-engineering and stripping down Director, an expensive industry-standard authoring program, thus melding proprietary code and free software. Linker was the "multimedia equivalent of a throw-away camera," which allowed people to "get on with exploring ideas" (ibid.). It enabled people to make collaborative multimedia artworks by combining digital images, audio files, video files, and texts into hypertextual maps. Each map could hyperlink to maps made by others, making the exploration of the resultant non-linear screen-based artworks a rich experience for users/audiences by linking common themes. In an early critique of software as a cultural artefact, Fuller (ibid.) signalled that a "structure that in itself is fairly limited, particularly in size, becomes with the possibility of reiteration a far more powerful means of linkage. Collections become collectivities." Linker workshops demystified knowledge production, offering communities pathways into digital literacy, personal expression, and collective forms of recording personal and social histories. Although Mongrel (1998) itself has disbanded, unsupported Mac and PC versions of the Linker software remain downloadable.

178 For instance, educational technologist Rohan Webb (pers. comm. 7 April 2010) who himself hails from Palmers Cross is pioneering the ITALEDUCATION.NET initiative in association with mervin Jarman. The ITALEDUCATION.NET portal uses the ITAL (Interactive Teaching and Learning) e-learning platform built by Webb based on his empirical research of the Container's pedagogical approach. E-learning via rich multimedia addresses scalability issues

hacktivists produce tools for “diverse, much smaller, much more dispersed groups” to enable them to “plug into” the mainstream, so that “their expression can be represented in the global space” (m. Jarman, pers. comm. 29 March 2010).[179] A critical mass of cultural production from the margins manifests as an emergent “ourstream,” and eventually “ourstream” will become the mainstream (ibid.).

It is important to note that art provides the overarching frame for technological and pedagogical experimentation within the Container Project, rather than other paradigms such as free software or community media. This reflects mervin Jarman's own pathway, and the networks which grew out of the Artec and Mongrel experiences. Art functions as the “enabling space” (Jarman & Turner 2007d). Artists are the “creative thinkers” who bring the “fringes” to digital research and development, and by mixing art with technology they open up “new dimensions” (Jarman 2007a).

Visiting artists introduce workshop participants to new technologies and techniques, stressing the “concept of experimentation and testing protocols, programs, techniques to their limits” (Ruxton 2007). Typically, artists find ways to use tools beyond their original intentions, whereas “technicians, while also providing valuable guidance, don't inspire the same creativity and independence” (ibid.). As artists are often self taught, they can sense how students “experience learning a new skill,” and hence open a “dialogue” with students to help them uncover “ideas that they may want to express with the tools and techniques they are being taught” (ibid.). This is another way in which technology is collectively socialised.

Too many community arts projects using digital media pay lip-service to self-representation but lack the will and/or skills to make it happen, with the result that teachers frequently make projects for the students. Yet empowerment through digital literacy programs requires that participants engage with all creative and technical processes, controlling each phase of production and post-production, and maintaining momentum by rapidly completing projects. As Australian human rights lawyer, film maker, and media activist David Vadiveloo (2007: 106-7) notes, numerous community

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which the Container's formal digital skilling programs face. It extends outwards to the digital commons, as the online knowledge repository would enable other educators, activists, and community development workers to adapt Container workshop methods, developing “a modern community of learners” across the Caribbean (ibid.). The challenge is how to transpose the Container's pedagogical methods to the online domain, while retaining those community empowerment functions which have thus far been rooted in spatialised practices (R. Webb, pers. comm. 14 November 2010).

179 For example, the hacktivist network Tactical Technology Collective (2010) have specifically designed and built media toolkits for video, audio and publishing for activist use.

development professionals are “'farming'” disenfranchised groups, reaping financial benefits by keeping the disempowered dependent on the “expertise and skills of outsiders.” Instead, communities must demand “at least equal control or agency” over every stage of the creative process (ibid.). This position is reiterated in the Change Media Manifesto by media activists Carl Kuddell and Jennifer Lyons-Reid (2010, no page numbers), who state that many marginalised groups:

> only experience the power of media when an external, privileged film team parachutes in to document local issues or re-tell their stories, from a Media Expert's view point. We believe this disparity is a crucial element of the colonial language, which keeps marginalised people illiterate and disempowered. As long as these film teams don't train, share and leave capacities behind, we believe this process prolongs existing dependencies...

The Container Project addresses these issues by incorporating the training of peer facilitators into workshops. Leadership programs focus on leadership skills, pedagogical methods, and technical training. Peers become the “interface between the technology and the communities” (Jarman & Turner 2007d). Once a person has learned a skill they are considered to be an “expert,” and prove their status by “sharing knowledge” (Jarman & Turner 2007b). Learning is “always easier and more relevant when participants have a reason to apply skills they acquire” (Turner 2007b).

Peer training feeds into the production of the common. It both broadens the base of creative makers in a viral effect, as peer trainers must pass on pedagogical insights and skills to new peers in each workshop. For example, in 2006 Turner and colleagues trained a cohort of 15 facilitators from across Jamaica in a one month workshop associated with the national *Communities without Borders* workshop funded by ICT4D Jamaica.[180] The concept of a 'knowledge society' depicted in mainstream media typically depicts images of white, middle class workers, but in this parallel world we have non-white, poor peers producing original content and replicating opportunities via self-managed training. This returns us to Marcus Garvey's initiatives which interwove grassroots educational formats such as night school courses with the production of mass and niche media which incorporated material produced by the newly self-educated. The technologies might be different now but the intentions remain the same.

In March 2006 Jim Ruxton (2007), a Toronto-based electrical engineer, artist, and

180 “ICT4D Jamaica is an open, Jamaican-based network organisation established to define, promote and facilitate the use of information and communication technology in the development process” ('Welcome To ICT4D' 2010).

founder of the annual *Subtle Technologies* festival,[181] led a three week Container workshop on interactive dance. The outcome was a system enabling dancers to control video signals by their body movements. Participants demonstrated “intuition and determination” as they rebuilt old computers (ibid.). Curiosity is a basic requirement for engaging with any new skill, including electronics, and these youth had an abundance as they learnt how to solder and use multimeters (ibid.).

In July 2008 Canadian artist group Afrofuturists (Jennifer LaFontaine, Jim Ruxton, and Camille Turner) introduced people to another generation of digital tools during their stint at the Container Project's fifth anniversary 'As We Move' program, a year-long series of workshops and events. Participants in Ruxton's (2008a, 2008b) workshop built their own cyber Containers within the online multi-user environment of Second Life (SL) using virtual land loaned by the Ontario College of Art and Design; they then used their structures to showcase existing projects and share ideas. As development of SL environments requires access to both relatively powerful hardware, fast stable internet connections, and eventually money, the decision to use a potentially unsustainable platform invites critique.[182] Ultimately it reflects an attitude of pragmatism and expediency, along the lines of 'if you have it, we will use it for our own purposes, and mongrelise it'. Second Life is a potential vehicle to promote Jamaican culture, according to mervin, who describes the platform as “a mirror to your first life” ('The iStreet Lab', n. d.). Within the SL environment, “if you can think it, it can actually be done,” a statement revealing influences from both Rastafari and Garveyism (ibid.).

As Chevannes (in Hill 2005) explains, “Rasta's influence has been in the mind...in how it has changed thinking, the assumptions that people make.” A bunch of young Jamaicans proficiently using ICTs not only changes their self-perceptions, but also challenges others to rethink their prejudices. This returns us to Jaromil's (n. d.) conceptualisation of “Rasta software” as being tools for the “struggle for Redemption

181 Subtle Technologies is “dedicated to catalysing the development of new emergent practices in new media art by investigating the artistic relationships and collaborations between artists and scientists within the realms of art, science and technology” (Ruxton 2010).

182 An ongoing debate about the political, ethical, and cultural implications of developing artistic and educational projects within Second Life exists on the Institute of Distributed Creativity (iDC) mailing list. See for example the 'Labor in Second Life' thread (Kildall 2009) and the 'Anyone using SL' thread (Schiffler 2010). See also a report by veteran new media artist and educator Simon Biggs (2009: 16), which argues that SL is “predicated on a socio-economic model that very closely resembles RL [Real Life]. Specifically, it is predicated on a model that closely resembles US cultural tropes and, especially, the cultural mode we are familiar with as Capitalism.” Biggs identifies problems arising for artists/educators using the platform, from intellectual property rights, to duty of care issues, to cyber predation.

and Freedom." Second Life might belong more to Babylon than Zion (signifying Rastafarian utopia), but when users mongrelised it, it could wield an affective power.

The embedded influences of Garveyism and Rastafari manifest through the Container Project's formal programs, quotidian activities, and general ambience. Self-esteem, reinvigorated cultural identity, technical prowess, creative expression, and participation in a transglobal creative network are significant outcomes. Core technology has been artfully cajoled and tweaked in order to be relevant to its users. We conclude this chapter by returning to history, to the modern period of economic liberalisation and political violence. As Babylon intensifies people yearn for emancipation, and the expressive arts give material form to collective imaginations. This returns us to the methods of Mongrel, and two initiatives of its progeny mongrelStreet—the iStreet Lab mobile media lab unit, and the iStreet microTV station.

Part Four, Liberation

The Violent Consequences of Economic Liberalisation and Pauperisation

> Ideas cannot be destroyed once they have become the ideals of millions of people.
> —Amy J. Garvey, 1963

What impediments prevent Jamaicans from overcoming the social and economic problems that beset them? How does the issue of endemic violence sit within this? Although these complex problems are beyond my study's scope, they must be flagged as they explain why change-oriented projects such as the Container resonate with local communities and now garner practical support from agencies such as UNESCO.

A least one quarter of the Jamaican population live in poverty according to one study, suggesting that neither emancipation, post-colonial struggles, nor Rastafari's enormous cultural impact fundamentally altered the power relations running through the island's social fabric (World Bank Publications 2004: 42-44). Poverty is even more pervasive other research suggests, a situation exacerbated by an economic liberalisation program binding Jamaica to controversial Free Trade Agreements and international debt obligations (Black 2001).[183] The implementation of neoliberal policies

183 Although Jamaica's economic liberalisation program started in the early 1990s the benefits to dominant power interests were offset by a financial crisis and lack of regulatory measures (World Bank Publications 2004: 1). The rise in real wages coupled with the impossibility of running 24-hour shifts due to crime problems resulted in much of the island's manufacturing shifting to lower-cost bases in the region including Mexico, Haiti, the Dominican Republic,

has caused massive unemployment in rural and manufacturing sectors, resulting in further waves of exodus of both unqualified and tertiary-educated youth.[184]

Despite free primary and secondary education in Jamaica literacy levels are low, with up to forty percent of grade six school leavers deemed functionally illiterate (World Bank Publications 2004: 99). School absenteeism and early drop out are common, and the cumulative effect of these problems is a “vicious cycle of youth at risk, especially males, and unemployment and poverty” (ibid. 5). Jamaica has the one of the world's highest rates of violent crime, with poverty identified as a key causal factor (ibid. 115), along with illiteracy, destabilised families, and “lack of community empowerment to address/ ameliorate problems before they escalate” (Report of the National Committee on Crime and Violence 2002: 13).[185] Furthermore, extreme poverty has spawned the problem of “political tribalism” (Report of the National Committee on Political Tribalism 1997; see also Footnote 188).

The World Bank (WB) proposes a neoliberal remedy to Jamaica's problems. It links the goal of “sustained growth” with strategies such as limiting increases in real wages, privatising the few remaining public entities, supporting private schools, imposing tertiary education fees, introducing user-pays systems for utilities including power, roads and tolls, and reducing crime (World Bank Publications 2004: 3). The documentary film *Life and Debt* by Stephanie Black (2001) delivers a more nuanced

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Trinidad and Tobago. Jamaica's mineral resource and export, bauxite, had become severely depleted due to its Cold War importance to the United States (Bertram 2007). Now Jamaica has partially deindustrialised, with its main exports including sugar, bananas, and some “unskilled labour-intensive manufactured products” (World Bank Publications 2004: 142). This leaves communications, transport, power, and tourism as the only potential growth sectors (ibid. 57).

184 The massive emigration has been primarily to the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. In the 1990s eighty percent of tertiary-educated Jamaicans emigrated, and, along with other less-educated emigrés, they send home regular remittances from their wages (World Bank Publications 2004: 66-7). These remittances “have probably kept people out of poverty, but not contributed much to its decline” (ibid. 41). The World Bank antidote to the “brain drain” (especially of locally-trained teachers and nurses who are actively recruited to work overseas) proposes that Jamaica privatise tertiary education to recoup its losses in public education investment.

185 In 1999 youth under 24 years of age committed 55 percent of all crimes, and the “substantial percentage” of 15-16 year school drop-out “renders a large number of poor children, largely male, susceptible to engaging in crime and violence” (World Bank Publications 2004: 115). Young males are also the “most likely victims” of violent crime” (ibid. 5).

reading of Jamaica, employing a multi-voiced critique from the margins and academia. Farmers, political scientists, economists, and factory workers discuss the impact of Structural Adjustment Programs and other control mechanisms imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), WB, and others.[186] By the end of the 1990 decades of foreign manipulation had created a national debt of 7 billion dollars, along with a massive decrease in Jamaica's capacity to produce food and goods for both domestic and export markets.[187]

Even so, Jamaica's workers were costing too much in globalisation's increasingly integrated circuits of exchange, countered by the importation of Asian workers (mirroring the import of indentured Indian workers post-emancipation), and subsequent off-shoring to Mexico and other cheaper sites of labour. Around 18,000 Jamaicans have lost their jobs as a direct result of free trade agreements, while vital infrastructure has

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186 Both the IMF and the WB were established following the United Nation's monetary and financial conference at Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, in 1944. The IMF facilitated short term borrowing for WW2's victors, the WB financed the rebuilding of Europe, and colonies like Jamaica had no presence in global restructuring. Following independence, postcolonial nations needed time to build their economies. Jamaica unravelled during the 1973 oil crisis, and relied on restrictive IMF loans which forced health and education program cuts. Jamaica devalued its currency, and citizens bore rising costs of essential imported goods including food, fuel, and medicine. From the 1970s to the late 1990s Jamaica's debt grew from 800 million dollars to 7 billion dollars (Black 2001). An earlier feminist critique of Structural Adjustment Programs in general, and in particular their impact on female Jamaican rural and industrial workers as “vibrant” sectors were systematically destroyed throughout the 1980s, supports the anecdotal perspectives expressed in Black's film (see Sparr 1994).

187 The agricultural sector was in terminal decline, as 'free trade' had removed import tariffs and export subsidies. Local farmers were unable to compete with US farmers who could borrow money at half the interest rate than IMF-imposed conditions for Jamaicans. By 1994 member countries of the World Trade Organisation were signing off on the GATT agreement. This “new world order of trade” (soon to be fiercely opposed by activists mobilising via the internet) heralded the end of government regulation over the trade of most commodities (Black 2001). For Jamaicans it also meant the destruction of the local dairy industry and the end of “national food security” (ibid.). Concurrently, Jamaica's manufacturing sector was being eroded with the introduction of 'tax-exempt free zones' for US outsourced sweatshops. Non-unionised, low-paid local workers were corralled behind concrete fences and barbed wire, working long hours in “slavery” conditions to assemble products using US materials (ibid.). As one worker commented, the “goods come in, in a container, and go through guarded gates. After it leaves the free zone it goes back onto the ship, never in effect having touched the shores of Jamaica” (ibid.). Here we can see the shipping container symbolising globalisation and its regime of wage slavery.

been seriously eroded (ibid.). A confidential WB note revealed that the three Structural Adjustment, five sectoral loans since 1981, along with some IMF operations, had increased Jamaica's debt burden while achieving "neither growth nor poverty reduction," a bleak assessment casting doubt on the efficacy of neoliberal solutions as recommended in the subsequent 2004 WB report (ibid.).

Politically-motivated violence which has dogged Jamaica for decades is exacerbated by pauperisation created by the international banking system. Historically, the warring gangs giving rise to a culture of political tribalism have been affiliated with one or the other of Jamaica's main political parties, either the right wing Jamaican Labor Party (JLP) or the left wing Peoples' National Party (PNP) (Bennett 2007).[188] New youth gangs from a "badman culture" where youth compete to be "the baddest man...the cruellest man" now compound already divisive traditional political affiliations (ibid.). Systematic intimidation has escalated with over 1300 gang-related deaths in 2006, creating a "volatile, unstable" climate where violence is triggered by "the slightest thing" (ibid.).

Just as the collective experience of Babylon had a particular shape and set of consequences for Jamaicans throughout the first half of the 20th century, it has taken on new forms during the recent era of economic liberalisation. Young males have been especially affected, as reflected by their diminished school participation, massive reduction of employment opportunities, and over-representation in the criminal justice system. Consequently, the Jamaican male's social imperative to be the main family provider has been severely compromised.

With the material odds stacked against a nation through increasingly integrated mechanisms of power, the pathway through despair and resignation requires the creation of new collective imaginaries powerful enough to transform both internalised patterns and external conditions. That which "we scream against is not just out there, it is also inside us...at times it seems that our scream itself is the only fissure of hope," Holloway (2005: 69) notes. Participatory cultural production can join individual screams in a chorus that swells in intensity, becoming a call to collective action.

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188 Gang rivalry extends back to 1962, when in the first post-independence elections the victorious JLP built houses for its followers, an action mirrored by the PNP, sparking riots as the political parties fought over land (Bradley 2000: 180-182, 187-189). In the notorious 1980 elections in which 800 people died, it has been alleged that politicians armed the gangs, instructing them to fight for votes (ibid. 495-497). In 2006 over 10,000 people in Kingston were involved in gangland activities including murder, torture, and protection rackets (Bennett 2007).

The Role of Creativity and Critical Perception in Social Change

> You have a certain love that comes from hard struggle, long suffering, a certain love through pain gird itself with that hope of freedom. Not to give up.
> —Joe Higgs, 1977[189]

Art, poetry, music, dance, and other cultural forms transport evidence of the human imagination through space and time. Repudiating the notion of racial essentialism, Afro-American cultural theorist bell hooks[190] (1991: 29) argues that "black identity has been specifically constituted in the experience of exile and struggle." In the context of the African diaspora, distinctive "black expressive cultures" arise at the "intersection of 'race' and class" (Gilroy 1987: 154). In the slavery times elites suppressed literacy to obstruct the enslaved's ability to organise resistance movements. However, this enforced illiteracy resulted in the slaves' "compensatory refinement of musical art," and of a strong poetic voice (Gilroy 1993: 36). Consequently, music propelled black struggles by "communicating information, organising consciousness and testing out...the forms of subjectivity which are required by political agency, whether individual or collective, defensive or transformational" (ibid.). This rich history could support a contemporary praxis in which the strategic production of a "diasporic aesthetics" could function as "both a critique of capitalism and a productive basis for new social movements" (Gilroy 1987: 6).

It is because we are "*conscious beings*" that we "exist in a dialectical relationship between the determination of limits" and our own freedom, says Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1996: 80, emphasis in original). Education is never neutral but always political, "either in the sense of a consolidation of the existing circumstances or with respect to their change" (Sternfeld 2010, no page numbers). Therefore, an educator cannot be naïve but must be prepared to take a side, and, despite the "contradiction" which this can entail, this very contradiction "could effect an opening to agency, a possible space for action" (ibid.). Critical literacy enables everyone, not only self-designated leaders, to examine the circumstances of social existence, and is a precursor to enacting strategies for change. This holistic "revolutionary praxis" opposes the hierarchical, segmented praxis of the "dominant elites" (Freire 1996: 107).

As we hone our skills of "critical perception" and embody them "in action," a

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189 Joe Higgs was an influential Reggae musician (and later record producer) who hailed from Trenchtown, Kingston's infamous shanty town (Marre 1977).

190 bell hooks [sic] uses this uncapitalised spelling of her name.

"climate of hope and confidence" develops, which inspires us to overcome situations that limit us (ibid. 80). To achieve our goals we must act upon the "concrete, historical reality" which has generated these "limit-situations" (ibid. 81). We humans have the capacity to "create products" detached from ourselves, and by our actions "create the realm of culture and history" (ibid.). Human beings "*are* praxis," says Freire (ibid., emphasis in original), engaged with reflection and actions that "transform reality." As "transforming and creative beings" we produce both "tangible objects" and also "social institutions, ideas, and concepts," and thus together we make history (ibid. 82).

Dehumanisation scars both those "whose humanity has been stolen" and also those "who have stolen it" (ibid. 26). Thus, the major "humanistic and historical task" that the oppressed face is both to "liberate themselves and their oppressors" (ibid.). Liberation can only be gained by the oppressed "through the praxis of their quest for it," and it is a fight that will "constitute an act of love opposing the lovelessness which lies at the heart of the oppressors' violence (ibid. 27). A vital early step is for people to "perceive the reality of oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform" (ibid. 31). When people discover the "yearning to be free," they realise it can only be "transformed into reality" when this same yearning is "aroused" in their "comrades" (ibid. 29).

Mongrel and mongrelStreet have been alchemical experiments in the Freirean tradition, offering people various modes of digital expression to recognise, capture, and transform emotional and social realities.

From Mongrel to mongrelStreet: Designing Tools for Nomadic Situations

> Learning is deserting schools and going to the streets.
> —Hans Ulrich Obris, 2009

The Mongrel art collective emerged from a series of "powerful cultural and political exchanges at Artec in 1995," according to founding member Richard Pierre-Davis.[191] The group made "socially engaged cultural product," a broad brief which involved making art, building software, running workshops, and helping other "mongrels" to make their own projects (Lovink 1999: 306).[192] The work produced by Mongrel was exceptional,

191 As mentioned previously Mongrel's core members were mervin Jarman, Richard Pierre-Davis, Matsuko Yokokoji, and Graham Harwood. This core was the hub of a network structure which expanded and contracted with each project. See Lovink (1999), Pierre-Davis (n. d.).

192 Mongrel's art projects included the *Blacklash* computer game, the Heritage Gold bastardised Photoshop application, and the *Natural Selection* search engine (Lovink 1999, Greene 2004:

both in its aesthetic and articulation of a strong political position, especially around issues of race and class as they related to digital culture, and for this reason the group rapidly attracted attention within the nascent international digital arts/new media scene. Mongrel co-founder mervin Jarman had experienced personally digital culture's classist “slant” against the marginalised. Yet when the collective “street ingenuity” of the poor was affirmed and harnessed in creative workshops, the technological bunkers could be stormed (Jarman & Turner 2007c). Accessible software was needed, and Mongrel stepped up to make it.

Mongrel's dissolution in 2007 propelled mervin Jarman to re-energise an earlier art vehicle for empowerment and emancipation, mongrelStreet.[193] Consequently mervin and fellow ex-Mongrel Richard Pierre-Davis set up the MongrelX company to produce mongrelStreet projects (Jarman 2007a). Their direct focus was the street as it is experienced by “diaspora people who are in London, working with people in London, about London” (ibid.).[194] At the same time mongrelStreet has a global dimension, because a “mongrel street” exists in every city. Richard Pierre-Davis (1998) explains that “the more you localise, the more you internationalise by focusing on the very local,” hence creating something that “appeals worldwide.”

Whilst mervin has changed “metaphysically,” he states that he is “not indifferent” to people like himself, and hence he is “still there,” and “still feeing that pain” (ibid.).

> I still cringe when someone gets a kicking because they are seen as underprivileged and there to be taken advantage of. Police, whoever, trample all over you, and so I feel compelled through with what I have to make a contribution to that fringe, to that marginal society,

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122-5, 136-7). Their projects consistently “attacked the 'tolerance' of the middle classes,” provoking audiences/users to confront their own prejudices and complicity in systems of power and privilege, and gave the group a distinctive edginess (Medosch 2005: 232–233). Through their “aggressive 'mongrelisation'” of mainstream software programmes and internet tools, Mongrel “made race an issue” at a time when the prevailing hype promised that the internet would “magically” make social prejudices disappear (ibid.).

193 The concept had been seeded at I and I Media when mervin had experimented with setting up “street infrastructure” for the digitally-curious, initiatives he continued under the auspice of mongrelStreet (Jarman 2007a). Although Mongrel made work which was “passed onto the community,” mervin's concern was that Mongrel did not cater for enough people from the street (ibid.). Art's elitist connotations, and Mongrel's promotion as an “artist collective,” tied them to the art “genre” rather than the “bad boy hardcore streets” (ibid.).

194 As mervin Jarman has family, including two children, based in London, he divides his time (and hence projects) between London and Palmers Cross.

> so that they can step up and start defending themselves in that respect (mervin Jarman 2007a).

The Jamaican street is a particular site of social and economic interaction, as mentioned previously.[195] Ethnographic research in downtown Kingston undertaken by Barry Chevannes (2003: 219) revealed numerous school age boys gambling, playing or walking around the streets; others worked as “couriers and messengers for drug dealers,” and stealing was a “major activity” in general. Gambling was a “nonstop” daily activity, and young males on the cusp of adolescence ran a “grave risk” of being drawn into drugs, “easily available” guns, robbery, and other crime (ibid.). Whereas most school age girls attend school, the street remains the setting in which male children are socialised.[196] In this cosmology, the “street” represents all space outside the confines of the domestic “yard” (ibid. 222). Incorporating “bars, video shops, street corners...abandoned houses,” the unbridled street contrasts with the feminised contained and monitored yard. In any community young men “control” the street and “regulate” its “flow of life” (ibid.).

However, the street also “provides opportunities,” as it is integral to the process of “toughening” boys to survive,” along with “pain and the threat of pain” administered in the yard (ibid. 229). The paramount objective of survival involves fighting and defending oneself, keeping alert to being conned, and hustling “to create a living out

195 In general terms, the street phenomenon is spatially and temporarily localised, and simultaneously part of an historical global matrix arising from the processes of urbanisation. As the currents of industrialisation and postindustrialism chart their courses of accumulation by dispossession, street life intensifies. The chaotic 17th century London street life depicted in William Hogarth's etchings revealed the human impact of proto-industrialism's first fallouts, those who had been forced into the cities by the waves of rural land enclosures. Likewise, the turbulent street life of the early 21st century characterised by drug dealing, hustling, petty and violent crime, and scavenging has been depicted by contemporary creative artists; the acclaimed television series *The Wire*, for example, shows the power relations of Baltimore street life that run from the ghettoes, to council chambers, to property developers' board rooms (Holland et. al.). Both Hogarth's etchings and *The Wire* artistically demonstrate that the archetypal street never exists in isolation from the engine of capital which has created it. As gentrification today sweeps some streets clean, new streets emerge in its wake.

196 In contrast to the street, the yard—the domestic space behind a fence, is a different “historical space and arena of cultural and social intercourse” in the Caribbean, and the only place “where mothers are able to control the socialisation of their children (Chevannes 2003: 221). The “yard” represents “a protective circle” around (especially female) children (ibid. 222).

of nothing" (ibid. 230). A further meaning of survival is the ability "to surmount the odds" (ibid.). The concept of struggle is embedded within that of survival, with both evoking "a sense of historical tradition" back to the times of slavery and emancipation.

Yet the valorisation of survival lays its own traps, not least of which is the contraction of human potential. "Survival is budgeted life," declared the Situationist Raoul Vaneigem in a recent interview (Obrist 2009, no page numbers). The "system of exploitation" of nature and humanity millennia ago caused an "involution in which creativity...was supplanted by work" (ibid.). Earlier forms of collective creative life "gave way to a brutish struggle for subsistence" (ibid.). We need to reclaim that "distinctive trait" which liberates humans from our "original animality"—creativity, (ibid.). Our capacity for original thought and mobilisation enables us to build self-managed societies based on human interests. The collective task of rebuilding the "social fabric" must be accompanied by individuals rebuilding "their own daily existence" (ibid.). In this way we advance from the "struggle for subsistence and predation to a new art of living," in which everyone benefits (ibid.). We must "invent nomadic learning" as part of this planetary-wide social reconstitution (ibid.).

Empathy with strugglers whose energies were consumed by quotidian matters of survival had driven the Container Project. In particular the Container reached out to those whom their own communities considered the hardest to reach, as everywhere the "human factor...is still out there, still locked out, still crying out for some kind of assistance" (mervin Jarman 2007a). As the Container lab had become rooted in Palmers Cross, mervin and collaborators conceived two initiatives to transpose the project's ethos and methodology to temporary spatial and electronic locations.

The iStreet Lab and the iSt.Lab Micro TV use the street as a site of collective production, distribution, and enjoyment. The Jamaican indigenous-built sound systems and 'riddims' (rhythms) which gave rise to the transglobal musical forms of dub and dancehall were born in the street. So too might these techno-social innovations go global, connecting with both similar-spirited cultural innovators around the world, and testing alternative forms of social and economic exchange for cultural products.

Seeding Networks: the iStreet Lab and iSt.Lab Micro TV

> Cycles of struggles form their own geography, unevenly developed and full of potential. Circuits connect with other and replicate, turning cycles of struggles into spirals and opening up new planes of resistance.
>
> —Stevphen Shukaitis & David Graeber, 2007

The youth who had helped build the Container were people who normally "carried

the guns and did the robbing" in Palmers Cross, and consequently some locals advised mervin to clear this "den of bad boys" (Jarman 2007a). Yet the robberies had ceased since the Container's arrival. Over time the cohort of users expanded, and some of the youth deliberately withdrew as they felt that others would feel threatened by them. Yet it was imperative that all Container users accept that everyone was on the same footing with "nobody no better than nobody" (ibid.). The self-organising nature of the project has generated different forms of ownership and use. The most excluded from the community exhibit the strongest sense of belonging to the Container, because it is in *their* street and has become integrated into *their* street life, as mervin explains:

> And so you see if the space is empty, they'll be there. And as soon as people start to come in, them take time and them just disappear. However, they still have their eyes on the Container so nothing don't go missing, nothing can't go wrong, no out of the ordinary activity can take place, because someone will always be on the phone to me saying, "Hey, this movement don't look right." And if I'm not there, or it's something that needs attention, somebody will be attending to it. And it's these same guys who are in the shadows (Jarman 2007a).

The relationships that these youth "in the shadows" have forged with the Container and each other contributes to the project's distinctiveness. Lives have changed, as evidenced by the sustained drop in local crime and other forms of anti-social behaviour. The social inclusiveness of the project has given the "bad boys" a chance to interact with different types of people, leading them to "feel valued themselves" (ibid.). Although the Container's "*front end*" is similar to other community media projects, Sonia Mills (2007, emphasis in original) argues that it is the "*back end*" which makes the project "remarkable":

> ...when you visit the Container, the back end—the ethos and the guiding philosophy, and the expectations and the effort that people want to put in and get out are all very palpable. Which is the strange (almost mystical thing) because all it is is a container, admittedly, attractively and ingeniously prepared to be a multi-media lab, in a quite drab, drive-through community, peopled by very ordinary, third world poor looking people, young men hanging about or passing through (S. Mills 2007).

The Container's pedagogical methods directly address divisive social fragmentation, achieving an unprecedented harmony amongst people who, because of their affiliations, would normally consider themselves to be enemies. As previously noted,

Jamaican gang rivalries exacerbated by party political machinations, and proliferating gun use aggravates already tense situations. While mervin was a known supporter of the People's National Party (PNP), many of the "guys on the corner" were Jamaica Labor Party (JLP) supporters, while others were affiliated with the PNP. It was already highly unusual that people from opposing factions would choose to inhabit the same space.

Understanding the social dynamics perfectly, mervin's tactically divided the technical training by teaching different people different skills, which they then had to teach one another. This method created independent "experts" in different areas—software programs, hardware maintenance, and recording equipment. As the Container is a neutral space, in which the only rule is to respect others, lab users needed to collaborate in order to learn the tools. In addition, some of the rival faction leaders were trusted with additional custodial responsibilities, which required them to coordinate various tasks together, especially when mervin was out of Jamaica.

The deliberate inversion of conventional hierarchies of knowledge has profoundly shifted social dynamics both inside and outside the Container. No Container members have been robbed or mugged, which mervin attributes to newly acquired survival skills. People from rival factions can now greet each other on the street as friends as they have already "socially engaged" inside the lab. But had the social architecture been more conventional, with people keeping to themselves in "little cubes," indifferent to those around them, then they would have had no friends (Jarman 2007a). The Palmers Cross successes confirmed mervin's thesis that his "bredrins still on the corners" could make something of it given the opportunity (m. Jarman pers. comm. April 2007). Yet countless "hard to reach young people" based elsewhere felt similarly "rejected and excluded" from most cultural and educational spaces. A nomadic solution was needed to transport the Container praxis.

Hence in 2008 the Container "mother ship" launched the iStreet Lab,[197] an initiative

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197 The iStreet Lab is also referred to as the "iSt.Lab" in various published materials. The name iStreet Lab is a word play on High Street Lab, and reveals the project's spatial orientation, with its inbuilt capacity to be transported to zones that contain a high level of street activity (both legal and illicit), sites of various kinds of social interaction. The name also connotes the all-important "I" within the distinctive Rastafari lexicon, and its portmanteau of neologisms. The "'I' morpheme," says Honiak (1998: 173) "performs one of the most important functions of ritual metaphors" in that it "signifies a 'return to the whole'" and encompasses notions of "source, authenticity, primordiality, and completion." Therefore we could speculate that for a Jamaican either cognizant of, or directly identifying with, Rastafari principles, iStreet Lab could connote a place where people can be authentic to themselves, undivided amongst each other, and experience some kind of fulfilment.

to engage at-risk youth aged between 9 and 25 years of age, people often described as “fit only for dumping.” This socially engineered technology takes the form of a miniaturised multimedia lab located inside a plastic wheelie rubbish bin: a portable infrastructure ready to interface with street culture. Inside the bin are six Bluetooth-enabled Apple laptops loaded with multimedia software, a terrestrial radio station facility, an internet radio station, a low range television transmission facility covering a 1 mile radius, a sound mixing desk, digital recording devices, a colour printer, a sound system, and an LCD monitor attached to the interior bin lid.[198] Some of the Cross's “bad boys” had also contributed their ideas to the assemblage's design.

The iStreet Lab is a “social artwork” to be rolled into “hostile environments” inhabited by the “hardest to reach, the ones with a real attitude” are to be found (see Figure 5 on page 130). The lab becomes a temporary autonomous zone, with workshop participants automatically tapping into a “social network facility” consisting of the Container Project network, the wheelie bin lab network, and a transglobal network of creative producers and mentors (m. Jarman pers. comm. 12 May 2009). This manifestation of 'network society' demonstrates that informational capitalism dissolves traditional geo-spatial divisions around knowledge-based production. The multitude might be on the move, as adaptable workshops are transported cheaply “from street to street, from city to city in any crevice and corner” (Murphy 2007, no page numbers). The initiative is a “Behavioural Change Lab,” according to Richard Pierre-Davis (Jarman & Pierre-Davis 2009, no page numbers). Rather than attempting “to recycle the planet,” the iStreet Lab “focuses on recycling human behaviour because you cannot change the world without changing the people!” (ibid.).

One key element which distinguishes this project is the rich symbolic ground in which it is embedded. The original concept document expresses the emotional pain, yearning, and hope found in Reggae lyrics, an authentic poetic voice calling for the end of Babylon. From an “artistic perspective” mervin (Jarman 2007g) treated the form of the wheelie garbage as a metaphor to challenge the “notion of worthlessness,” and commonly held prejudice that “those brandishing hooded jumpers and hanging on the street corner is fit only for dumping (the rubbish bins).” His aim was to demonstrate that “those who are most isolated are actually the most creative among us...the risk takers who are willing to try things in a different way” (ibid.).

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198 An online comic book documents the construction phase and first round of workshops (Jarman 2009b). UNESCO Kingston Cluster Office for the Caribbean supported the construction of the iStreet Lab prototype. UNESCO might co-fund similar projects as it assists the upgrade of the Container Project into a certified regional training centre which links into the network of Caribbean Telecentres/Community Access Points.

Art is a generator of affects. For instance, black musical culture supplies people with a "great deal of the courage to go on living in the present," Gilroy (1993: 36) claims. Through art people can discover their authentic voices, which "expands" their minds, enabling them to "aspire to bigger things outside of the usual prospects," Turner (2007b) says. The "yearning that wells in the hearts and minds" of people who have been silenced by the "'master' narratives" is the "longing for a critical voice," argues bell hooks (1991: 27). Consequently, we should be "suspicious of postmodern critiques of the 'subject' when they surface at a historical moment when many subjugated people feel themselves coming to voice the first time" (ibid. 28).

How does a typical iStreet Lab produce new loquacious subjects, enticing out the "shy languages" Rodriguez (2001: 3) identifies? As the unit is self-powered by car batteries it can operate in remote rural enclaves. Laptops loaded with various user-friendly multimedia programs are introduced by artist-facilitators who impart enough basic skills for participants to immediately start working. Video and still cameras, sound recorders, and digital voice recorders to enable individual voice recording for multi-camera shooting, are shared as needed. An on-board storage server centrally backs up all productions. An amplifier and high quality audio speakers give an extra boost for in-situ performances and exhibitions. Built-in low-band video transmission capacity enables interested others in each local community to witness project's outcomes. As the workshop activities can be broadcast live locally on radio and television the transmission function is potentially an important tool in the "demystification of the street corners," helping to break down social prejudices (Jarman 2009b).

In 2009 the iStreet Lab facilitated workshops with young "risk takers" in four Jamaican street locales. As each Jamaican street has its own "Don" who controls the activities of the area, mervin first needed to gain each local Don's permission to run workshops. The creative multimedia workshops themes covered photo-journalism, video production, and sound production, and attendees' feedback posted on the iStreet Lab's social networking website (now offline) was consistently positive. Twice a day people had to mount and demount the lab, grappling with an array of cables (see Figure 6 on page 169). For the participants this was an easily acquired skill, because "that's what you do on the twisty, windy way of the streets, you have to know whom to avoid and to whom you should go" (Jarman 2010c). Consequently the participants' lived experience of the intricacies and nuances of street culture enabled them to negotiate the "street technology" which the lab exposed them to.

The four-day workshop in Fletchers Land produced two videos and three audio tracks (see Figure 7 on page 169). During this time in a community bearing a dangerous

Figure 6, Wiring up the iStreet Lab

Figure 6: A workshop participant wiring up the iStreet Lab. Photograph: mervin Jarman.

Figure 7, iStreet Lab Video Workshop, Jamaica

Figure 7: An iStreet Lab Video Workshop, Jamaica, 2009. Photograph: mervin Jarman.

reputation for criminal behaviour, no gear was stolen, no-one was held up, and the team were welcomed warmly (Jarman 2009b: 7). This community subsequently started a fund to finance their own iStreet Lab.[199] Such committed sweat equity is necessary for the Container to become peer mentor itself, supporting community empowerment projects to become self-sustaining. The next stage for the iStreet Lab is to partner with a university design team (possibly in Australia) to "develop a comprehensive blueprint and user manual" to assist communities to fund raise and adapt the principles of the lab to suit their own circumstances (m. Jarman, pers. comm. 20 April 2010).

The iStreet Lab is a generative motor for participatory cultural production, giving "youth on the corner the means to create his/her own technology" (Jarman 2009b). People who would not necessarily think of themselves as artists or producers can experiment, making cultural works relevant to their experiences and dreams, and harness ICTs to share their productions. Alternative media involves "reconstructing the self-portrait of ones own community and...culture," states Clemencia Rodriguez (2001: 3). Self-perceptions shift radically, as participants re-imagine themselves as belonging to a global pool of producers. Here lies a clue to how autonomous cultural production can seed social transformation, as the excitement of liberating untapped creativity produces a "recodalisation" or rewiring of existing negative social relations (Jarman 2007a). Once people discover themselves "embodied in the codes" surrounding them, or find a method of "recoding" the old scripts, there is "no greater achievement" (m. Jarman, pers. com. 6 April 2007). The philosophy is "one of voluntary emancipation, where you can set yourself free or be enslaved by the action you make," echoing the spirit of Marcus Garvey and others liberationists who have fought for freedom (ibid.).

The iSt.Lab Micro TV project, a collaboration between the Container Project and Swiss collective Mediengruppe Bitnik in August 2008, added a new iteration of digital production and transmission to the Container's mix of modalities.[200] Bitnik constructed a "low-range TV broadcasting system" using "affordable standard components," for subsequent use as a a "playing field for artistic experimentation and new cultural uses" (Mediengruppe Bitnik 2008a) The visual web diary chronicling the intensive work period

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199 A second project occurred with inner-city youth in Tower Hill in conjunction with a workshop run by the From Boyhood to Manhood Foundation, creating a new partnership relationship and the commissioning of their own wheelie bin lab. Subsequently, the lab's successes inspired the St Catherine's community to organise a Holistic Community Development Expo.

200 Mediengruppe Bitnik (2008a) is an "artists collective" whose main focus is to "investigate digital and analog media and the impact they have on society." Their "exploratory work" includes the "development of social software and interfaces," and aims to create a "field for social and cultural action and collaboration."

between 14-22 August 2008 reveals the different kinds of labour involved in setting up a broadcast system from scratch: building and installing antennas, connecting cables to cameras and computers, producing original video content for transmission, designing a logo and jingle, and general problem-solving (Mediengruppe Bitnik 2008c). The immediate task on day one of the workshop was to "integrate the people straight away," and to kick start this "many hands helped to assemble the antenna" (Mediengruppe Bitnik 2008a). Throughout the fortnight locals learned new skills, whether from participating in formal workshops or by pitching in when needed, mirroring the processes involved in the original shipping container lab build and initial workshops.

In the space of a few days collective labour and shared expertise transformed a Babylonian system of cultural consumption into an experimental and potentially radical machine for the production of new forms of social subjectivity. The medium has a message, declaring that these hitherto ignored or derided voices deserve attention. I am reminded of the words of Vernon Ah Kee, an Aboriginal artist and member of the Brisbane-based artist group Proppa Now, who observed that Indigenous peoples' "level of visibility in society is zero."[201] Consequently, said Ah Kee, an important goal for the socially marginalised is to describe themselves and "gain acceptance of that description."

The iSt.Lab Micro TV's logo of a young black man perched on the Container's roof grasping an antenna symbolises a voice which amplifies and travels with each new techno-social iteration. Micro TV created a social bridge into people's homes by transmitting localised cultural content to the community at large, while the archived online video stream untethered the content from the spatially-localised, temporally-anchored live transmission.[202]

Video activism is rooted in the Do It Yourself (DIY) tradition of grass roots cultural production. DIY TV broadcasting is comparable to the field of radio broadcasting, in which "cultural producers, hobbyists and amateurs" have been experimenting with "different forms and contents" since 1906 (Mediengruppe Bitnik 2008b). In contrast, the production of "self-made film images" only became generally affordable with the video camera/Video Cassette Recording (VCR) "revolution" in the late 1970s (ibid.). It

201 Ah Kee was speaking at the Adelaide Festival's Artist Week on 27 February 2010, and this verbatim quotation is taken from my handwritten Artist Week conference notes on the day.

202 The diverse content of the 150 minute pilot transmission ranges from local Second Life designer Winston Stephenson giving a guided tour of his virtual container, to a local resident preparing the Jamaican national dish of Acke fruit and Swordfish in a creative cooking program. See streaming video clip at Mediengruppe Bitnik (2008c).

is interesting to consider the video cassette recorder as another form of social technology, although its social potential was not well known by VCR's domestic users. The VCR could not only record commercial television signals but could transmit self-produced video media, and thus offered a "cheap and easy way for people to build their own TV broadcasting system," as Bitnik explain (ibid.):

> All VCRs which have an 'Antenna In' and an 'Antenna Out' have a frequency modulator built into them, since they need to modulate the signal they receive into a UHF TV signal. With the technology finally becoming affordable, the first TV pirates began to appear with home-made experimental TV broadcasts. *The DIY subcultures these emerged from encouraged people to take technology into their own hands and to decide themselves what they wanted to have broadcast*. What we learned from these pioneers is that in technology you can often build a sender out of a receiver, just by turning a few circuits around (Mediengruppe Bitnik 2008b, emphasis added).

The Bitnik collaboration inserted the Container Project into a semi-organised, international network of video activists and their audiences and interconnections. This dynamic is typical of the "informal networks" which gravitate around the kind of networked cultural activism initiatives described in the anthology *From Weak Ties to Organised Networks: Ideas, Critiques, Reports* (Lovink 2009). Eventually many informal networks must assess whether or not advantages will be gained by transforming into a "so-called 'organised network'" to better support "sustainable knowledge sharing, production, and perhaps most importantly, reproduction" (Coleman et al. 2009: 6). The "scalar dimension" of the Container is increasingly becoming an issue in its ability to deliver formal instructional programs, notes educational technologist Rohan Webb (pers. comm. 10 November 2010), suggesting that tensions between scaling-up and remaining free to "invent and innovate" in general might intensify until workable solutions are developed (Coleman op. cit. 7).

Although ICTs certainly facilitate aspects of the organisational form of the network, geo-political considerations impact upon any group's ability to fully manifest network culture. For example, although mervin Jarman's international presentations and workshops have been instrumental to developing an informal, organic network culture around the Container Project, his mobility is not necessarily shared by other Jamaican Container members. Most Jamaicans must give an "exhaustive account of how and why they have lived" to be even considered for permission to travel overseas, and if successful they must endure body and baggage searches (Black 2001). Occasionally local Container peer facilitators have been refused visas for countries to which they

have been invited. This ongoing problem has implications for the project's long term viability to be an active participant in a global network culture, as embodied experiences and exchanges are as vital as electronic interconnections.

Creative experimentation with techno-social systems such as DIY television broadcast and mobile media labs enables people locked out of the mainstream to challenge prejudice and disadvantage with their collective mediated bodies. These technologies invite a playfulness which is key to the subsequent production of emancipatory social imaginaries. Each public event adds to the incremental pool of cultural production, ripples that affect the social field. The reinvigorated community Palmers Cross itself created an “oasis” where “healing” could occur (Turner 2007b). When people link these changes to the Container praxis then the “ripple becomes a wave,” and harder for those in power to deny (m. Jarman, pers. comm. 31 March 2010). Yet some refuse to accept that transformation could possibly come “from this quarter,” and so the project must “do three times as much with ten times as much a result to be considered a serious effect!!” (ibid.). This can create a dilemma between the dynamics of spontaneity and play set against those of modularity and 'work'.

The Container Project is an “organic, holistic entity bridging many worlds” (Turner 2007b). Its “open concept” embodies struggle, and the possibility of surmounting obstacles, countering psychological exhaustion, community inertia, and social prejudice with a seemingly indefatigable will to thrive, not merely survive (ibid.). Wherever it manifests, from gigs in outback Broken Hill to inner city Toronto, the project is “recreated on the fly...adapted by the unique community in which it functions” (ibid.). From digital storytelling programs, iStreet Labs outreach, Second Life experiments, and micro TV transmissions, the project exhibits a dynamism making it an attractive flexible model, and a social force in its own right. After eight years of operation the project has achieved local and regional successes, and influenced the development of comparable grass roots empowerment programs in Canada and Australia. In 2008 The Container Project was the winner in the Education category of the prestigious Stockholm Challenge, which has been a cause of enormous pride within Palmers Cross ('Stockholm Challenge Event 2008').

The Container Project manifests a diasporic sensibility and aesthetic. It combines the digital with lightly-guided DIY methods to encourage the production of not only new cultural artefacts and forms, but more importantly, newly empowered social subjects simultaneously rooted in geo-spatial localities and electronically mobile along new network trajectories.[203] This networked diaspora is not only (or even) about

203 For example, a nascent internet radio portal administered by the Container Project will link

ethnic/racial identification but also about social class and political awareness. Tools and codes mongrelised, along with identities and attitudes, as emergent autonomous networks of production and distribution create their own motley multitudes.[204]

From the misery of slavery to the imposts of modern economic liberalisation programs, systemic barriers to Jamaicans' personal and political liberation have been in play for centuries. The survival imperative has become confused by the normalisation of violent crime, politically-manipulated gang warfare, and a hyper-masculinised street culture. Grassroots interventions literally transforming micro-communities street corner by street corner offer hope and possibility. Mongrelstreet localises and translocalises cultural production and transmission, giving the invisibles a media presence and voice. Diasporees have always inhabited more than one reality, and so network culture itself is not unfamiliar to them. The Container simply opened new networks and nodes of activity. Each new techno-social platform increases the functional and expanded literacy of communities excluded from information society. Most importantly, each platform, each pathway, opens new emancipatory possibilities inherent in self and collective reflection and expression, preparing the ground for deeper social transformation.

Summary and Observations

Cultural projects which use nomadic and networked forms of organisation, and which socially re-engineer info-capital's commodities and productive processes are potentially extremely powerful. This power is multiplied as networks from below interconnect. Poverty can be a brilliant mother of invention. From this meshwork of the poor-to-poor going peer-to-peer the philosophical construct of the multitude might

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into the Association of Caribbean Community Multimedia Centres (m. Jarman, pers. comm. 28 July 2010). In the meantime, the Container has set up its own net radio streaming server which from local community radio groups periodically transmit programs to a Caribbean diaspora “hungering for that direct contact with their communities...in language that they are familiar with.” See 'MongrelStreet Streaming Radio' 2010. Note that the website is active only when radio programs are streamed.

204 For example, a promotional online video clip for the iStreet Lab some London youth rap their feelings of anger, frustration, and being disrespected (Francis 2009). Digitised cartoon-style bodies traverse the streets against a changing backdrop of buildings, newspaper headlines, vehicles. A van pulls up and two mobile labs are unloaded. A young man tosses his gun in the bin, and others take up digital tools and begin recording. The message is unambiguous, giving voice to painful emotions, while suggesting that people collectively hold the power to transform material conditions.

liberate itself from the domain of theory and materialise in unexpected places. It could be that the rural enclave of Palmers Cross is one of those generative sites.

Although a single person, mervin Jarman, had conceived the Container Project, its actualisation was the fruit of many more cultural activists, each of whom had been captivated by the concept or had been drawn in to its material expression. The project has drawn upon the intellectual and material resources of loose network of artists, educators, and hacktivists to develop ingenious forms of “street technology” for creative expression by the most marginalised within the margins. By framing unfamiliar technologies within inclusive social architectures and using art as the experimental space to unleash the previously unnamed and unarticulated, the project has been a generator of DIY cultural production and localised social change. Technological repatriation has answered a yearning experienced by many for something other than despair, indignity, and basic survival. While no educational or political manifesto has formally guided the Container's evolution, its transformational social praxis resonates with elements of Latin American radical pedagogy, ARTEC's digital literacy experiments, and the Mongrel method of creative liberation.

The street is a strong trope in the paradigmatic site of postindustrial biopolitical production, the metropolis, and as such we can speak of it in general terms. However, the street can be differentiated along geo-spatial, ethnic, gender, and other lines. In the Jamaican context it is primarily a male domain, the site where male social identity is constructed by peers, the locus of legal and otherwise transaction associated with daily survival, and a battleground of violent gang conflict. The Container has leveraged the importance of the street in the Jamaican psyche and lived reality, integrating elements of street knowledge and street culture within its social architecture. It has made peer learning and positive socialisation a central feature of its informal and formal activities. At the same time it enacts the principle of social inclusion, and so everybody, male and female, young and old, no matter their reputation or gang/political affiliation, is made to feel welcome and safe in the Container street and yard. The bottom line is mutual respect. From a position of physical safety it becomes easier to take the inherent risks associated with learning new skills, and being duly rewarded with the status and responsibilities of becoming-expert.

Paradoxically, the Container Project is an uncontainer; its vision is uncontained and its programs are uncontained. The general aim is to support an individual and collective coming to awareness, a realisation that even the most marginalised and downtrodden person can exercise a choice about his/her life and future. The starting point is where people are at, an acknowledgement of their experiences, pain, yearning, and dreams. This is the realm of the common, for although Container participants might not know

one another at the outset of a workshop or network exchange, a commonality of experience exists amongst them and this produces a sociality from which new expressions of the common can grow.

Oppressed peoples have always created their own knowledge and support networks, and made their own emancipatory media. In Jamaica these histories of grassroots social and cultural production include slave resistance networks, Black newspapers, night schools, and Reggae music, each producing new forms of cultural identity and political agency. On the one hand the Container continues an historical lineage of politicised developmentalism rooted in industrial capitalism's global South. At the same time it is an expression of an emergent phenomenon immanent to globalised, networked postindustrial capitalism in which the old geo-spatial divisions are breaking down.

In the 15th century mercantile capitalism began carving out a New World, which essentially signalled new geographical territories and human bodies for exploitation. In the 21st century informational capitalism has spawned a Net World, marking new biopolitical areas of expansion and enclosure. However the tools and knowledge which enable info-capital to reproduce itself are no longer only solidified in dead machines, and the traditionally exploited have an unprecedented opportunity to use these same systems for a transformational project that seems to be an incremental evolution rather than a sudden revolution.

Chapter Four, Furtherfield

When I arrived at the Furtherfield headquarters in June 2005 for the first time, I had the sensation of entering a familiar environment.[205] Situated in a light industrial estate in the North London suburb of Haringey, the converted space filled with art, books, and machines physically anchors a group whose projects exist primarily in the electronic realm. At that time the space was also the domestic abode of Furtherfield's founders, Ruth Catlow and Marc Garrett. Open source as open house: an open invitation for people to participate in art projects in which the internet was the core productive and distributive medium. This is the realm of network art, or net art.

When I returned in September 2007 to conduct the first research interviews the pair had established a separate domestic space nearby.[206] Furtherfield HQ now had a studio/living space to accommodate artists-in-residence, adjoining the HTTP gallery for networked media art which had opened in October 2004.[207] By now Furtherfield had run numerous projects, and was receiving modest Arts Council of England funding to cover gallery running costs and a part-time administrator.

Our conversations and recorded interviews over the next four days were interspersed with communal cooking, a meal at a favourite Turkish restaurant, an exhibition opening, enjoying summer allotment borscht at writer/curator Armin Medosch's birthday party, and strolling through Finsbury Park. The sprawling metropolis of London concatenates to a series of villages connected by tube and bus routes. Similarly, Furtherfield, with its labyrinthine activities and histories is part of this world, as the social produces and is produced by the technological. Here is a sprawling site of geographically dispersed but electronically interconnected hot spots of biopolitical

205 I was there to participate in *Softly From the Ruins,* a weekend gathering of twenty-seven artists, writers, programmers, and media activists. The event was co-ordinated by Lisa Haskel from Media Art Projects, in collaboration with Furtherfield and Identity_Runners (an art group active between 1998-2006 comprised of Diane Ludin, Agnese Trocchi, and me).

206 After later reviewing this interview material from Catlow and Garrett I decided to limit my primary data set to their perspectives, plus those of software artist/programmer Neil Jenkins and composer/sound artist Roger Mills, both of whom had been involved with Furtherfield from its inception and had recently moved to Australia. I obtained additional material from online sources including the Furtherfield website, and related blogs and mailing lists. Furthermore, I commissioned a text on Furtherfield's core motivations by Catlow and Garrett (2007: 21-28) for *A Handbook for Coding Cultures*.

207 An “office/lab/playspace” is located behind the gallery, and the computer server rack is hosted remotely in Nottingham (R. Catlow, pers. comm. 2 August 2009).

production where the common is made. Manifesting as a network node within a neighbourhood of sister sites, Furtherfielders are doing it with others, challenging the logic of info-capital through artful play and playful art.

Furtherfield describe themselves as a non-profit organisation, community, and an artist-led group (Catlow & Garrett 2007: 22-23). As with each case study I refer back to my theoretical framework and the four lines of analysis to excavate the project's dynamics. Key questions are: what has inspired and driven the group; how does it constitute itself through its projects and networks; in which ways are its form and functions embedded in specific spatial, cultural, political, and historical matrices; and how does it feed into local and larger processes of social transformation? These are dealt with in the following way.

Firstly, I examine the socio-cultural and political circumstances driving Furtherfield's inception. The market valorisation of a small group of art school graduates branded “Young British Artists” had super-commodified art, activating others to reterritorialise art's boundaries by claiming the internet as a site and medium of cultural production. Decommodification of the art object via collectively-authored ephemeral and network practices had been pioneered by two international cultural waves born in the 1960s—Situationism and Fluxus. Their philosophical influences on Furtherfield were important touchstones in the group's desire to explore participatory cultural production.

Secondly, I discuss the techno-social processes and platforms which constitute Furtherfield. Their driving “Do It With Others” (DIWO) philosophy is contextualised by examining two software art projects. FurtherStudio was an online artist-in-residency program enabled by social software. It publicly exposed the normally invisible processes of art-making, and invited exchanges of ideas and digital materials between artist and visitors. FurtherStudio's digital code and social processes were reiterated in VisitorsStudio, a continuing online environment for collective multimedia jamming.

Thirdly, I demonstrate how the Furtherfield phenomenon is embedded within two uniquely British subcultural histories. British Punk was a short-lived, rapidly commodified, but nevertheless influential phenomenon in the mid-1970s which engaged working class youth around the country. Punk's core praxis of “Do it Yourself” (DiY) inserted social critique within an innovative style of cultural production, and created its own circuits of distribution. A decade later the city of Bristol birthed a unique alternative cultural scene, marked by a hybridisation of music genres, experiments with hitherto neglected media such as radio, and the melding of social and cultural activism. Furthernoise, a web-based platform for sound arts and experimental music exemplifies how the internet fosters the biopolitical production of both cultural content and communities attracted to the ideas and ethos which that content carries.

Finally, I discuss Furtherfield's liberatory potential, linking the protagonists' visions about cultural empowerment with their techno-social platforms and cooperative processes. Furtherfield's conceptualisation of affective, creative neighbourhoods materialises in an experiential praxis within the informational realm. Their tools and environments flow into a widespread movement of media democratisation, which extends beyond citizen journalism and community media to include a spectrum of speculative aesthetic practices. The online art projects *Rethinking Wargames* and *Dissension Convention* set up "microtopias" for collective reflection on macropolitics, seeding alternative social imaginaries to those offered by neoliberalism's Perma War.

Furtherfield is a project of projects, one which links into a network of micro-networks. It not only manifests in the disembodied, distributed sphere of the internet, but, importantly, it also regularly convenes events which bring people together in material spaces. It is a generator of the common (tools, knowledges, artefacts, networks), and perhaps an enabler of the multitude. While I will not overburden the following four-part analysis with undue post-Autonomist musings, I return to the theoretical framework in this chapter's conclusion, positing play as an antidote to info-capitalism's tendency to commodify all human experience.

Part One, Drivers

What is Art?

Beneath Furtherfield's surface of servers, software, and internet interfaces are anchors to the past. In the current era of extreme information overload coupled with historical amnesia it is crucial to reflect upon the past, in order to imagine the futures we want to build. Furtherfield's roots extend back through the resurgence of the national art market in the 1980s, to the angry reactions against Thatcher and Major's Britain, to the incandescence of France in May 1968, and back again to earlier intercontinental dialogues connecting artists, musicians, writers, and audiences co-creating "intermedial" experiences.

Catlow and Garrett consistently identify three forces which have impelled Furtherfield's creation and evolution: 'Brit Art', the Situationist cultural movement, and the trans-Atlantic Fluxus phenomenon. Two other influences, Punk and the Bristol scene, will be explored in Part Two. Significantly, information communication technologies are barely present in the cultural narratives which ignited Furtherfield, whereas collective social production is a strong common current. ICTs have been the medium of expression, the enabling machinery, but not the raison d'etre.

We first need to untangle some basic terminology about art. Furtherfield defines itself as an artist-led project, and its founders distinguish between their own art praxis and that of the "high art" milieu (Garrett 2007). Over the past twenty years some art production sectors have become hyper-commodified creating unprecedented stratospheric exchange values (Stallabrass 2006; Hughes 2008).[208] When certain art 'brands' are over-coded with monetary values, the word 'art' becomes more ambiguous. Are we signifying the products of an exclusive market place, the 'art' traded in the art market whose price depends on both scarcity and media-fuelled market speculation. Or are we referring to the more un(der)valued and typically unsaleable products of contemporary experimental 'art'? What about 'amateur' watercolours or wildlife illustrations, artefacts classified by their makers and appreciators as 'art'? Clearly 'art' can refer to, or exclude, each of these examples, depending on the discursive context.

Fluxus artist Dick Higgins (1984: 18) contrasted the tradition of media compartmentalisation rooted in the Renaissance with a resurgent syncreticism rooted in the liminal spiritual practices of tribal societies. A syncretic approach involves finding patterns and connections, and building parallel systems of thought and processes, as happened in the art movements of Futurism, Dadaism, and Surrealism (ibid. 95). Foregrounding the immediately social, affective, cognitive, and collective functions of art, Higgins presaged ideas about creativity which emerged soon after within cultural theory.

bell hooks (1990: 145) prefers to speak of "making culture," and the field of cultural theory frames art more broadly. Cultural production is social production as it builds and nurtures communities of "resistance" (ibid. 149). In *Yearning*, her book on art and radical Black subjectivities, hooks politicises and collectivises processes of creative production, liberating them from the dual strongholds of social elitism and the marketplace. Although the corpus of hooks's work is grounded in Afro-American Black experience, her ideas are transportable. Any willing person can offer their "ways of seeing and theorising, of making culture" as acts of solidarity with the oppressed (ibid. 145). "Revolutionary effort" seeks to "create new space where there is unlimited

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208 Although super-inflated exchange values usually apply to dead artists' works, exceptions exist. For instance, some 223 works produced by Damien Hirst, one of the stars of "Brit Art," fetched a record-breaking £111,464,800 at a 2008 Sotheby's auction. Not only was the record sale price for the *Beautiful Inside My Head Forever* works widely commented on, but also Hirst's use of an auction house to place the 'goods' in the market place without the usual intermediary dealer or gallerist (Bahaltain 2008; Vogel 2008). Art Observed (2008) noted that the auction was framed by the "surreal backdrop of a severe financial market collapse led by Lehman Brothers." Sotherby's (2008) press release details other auction "benchmarks."

access to the pleasure and power of knowing, where transformation is possible" (ibid.).

"Expressive cultures" is the preferred term of Black scholar and cultural theorist Paul Gilroy (1987: 6), using it as an umbrella for cooperative creative processes which generate multiplicity and abundance rather than art fashions and contrived scarcity. Just as racism "must be understood as a process" that oppresses and subjugates, expressive cultures can be understood as collective processes which contain possibilities for collective transformation and liberation (ibid. 27).[209]

Higgins, hooks, and Gilroy expand the remit of art by positing art as a plural act of direct production of the social and the political through symbolic means, rather than it being confined to individual acts of representation. Thus their perspectives complement post-Autonomist ideas about the general intellect's role in producing the common. These alternative framings of art refute the limits set by those who claim art as an pastime to be enjoyed by an elite class, or those see it as a means of commodifying cultural heritage and experience. These perspectives will inform our journey through the contested zone of what constitutes 'art.'

The Brit Art Phenomenon

> Micro-celebrities from the outer fringes of cultural production...are necessarily a two-dimensional deformation of what it is to be human.
>
> —Stewart Home, 2004

Two decades ago a handful of art school graduates were challenging received ideas about what constitutes art, but their aims were far from the emancipatory agendas previously noted. This group became tagged the 'young British artists' or 'yBas', and their actions would change the face and public perception of contemporary art in Britain.[210] The individualistic, commodity-based Brit Art phenomenon contrasts with the cooperative, process-based endeavours Furtherfield fosters. Whereas Brit Art narrowed

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209 Catlow (pers. comm. 2 August 2009) takes issue with Gilroy's "individualistic" construction of art, saying that she frequently must defend the notion of 'art' as it "seems in dire need of rehabilitation." For her the term 'expressive cultures' feels "rather passive." "It's about co-constructing our worlds—we can make our own worlds as sitting somewhere between Trotsky's 'mirror' and 'hammer' for culture," says Catlow.

210 Terminology to describe this art tendency varies, and I mainly use "Brit Art." "BritArt," "Britart," "high art lite," and "new British art" are alternative designations, as are "Young British Artists," "yBas" and "YBAs" for its collective producers (an appropriate word play on MBAs). A loosely related neologism, "Britpop," emerged a few years later to identify a British pop music genre typified by bands Oasis and Blur.

and stratified contemporary art's productive possibilities, the Furtherfield project would open and horizontalise them.

Brit Art emerged in the late 1980s, when much of Britain was suffering the consequences of the earlier Thatcherist adoption of neoliberal policies.[211] State funding for individual artists had ceased, the 1989 stock market plunge had ushered in a recession, and consequently, the art market, that "froth on the froth of speculation," had collapsed catastrophically (Stallabrass 2006: 5). With dealers and collectors deserting the scene, how would a new wave of artists make their names and sell their goods? Advertising mogul and major art collector/gallerist Charles Saatchi strategically traded out of "blue chip art" and into the recent British crop of then unknown and still affordable artists, a youthful cohort who were also perused by the organisers of the recently impoverished Turner Art Prize (Tate Britain 2005).

Against this backdrop of recession and market volatility, a loose group of youngish artists, many of them graduates from the University of London's prestigious Goldsmiths College, organised their own shows.[212] The official art world regarded these manifestations as novel for two reasons. Firstly, exhibitions were often staged in mid-recession architectural environments—vacant office, warehouse and industrial spaces. Although squatting such spaces has a long British tradition (for example, within anarchism, punk, and environmentalism), within a mainstream arts context this was a ground-breaking departure from the generic 'white cube' gallery space; it preceded by some years State-sponsored gentrification which would convert industrial precincts into culture industry hubs. Secondly, the organising artists used their industry knowledge and connections to invite their primary audience of collectors, gallerists, and mass media journalists to the openings and private viewings. Consequently, this elite undertook "pilgrimages" which would build their expectations as they physically traversed the abandoned ruins spawned by neoliberalism's deindustrialisation processes (Stallabrass 2006: 51).

The young British artists (yBas) tactically constructed a hot area of cultural

211 My main source on the subject of Brit Art is Julian Stallabrass's (2006) book, *High Art Lite: The rise and fall of young British art*. I have chosen to focus on Stallabrass's arguments as his controversial book, published in 1999 when the brand was generating huge profits for makers and speculators, was the first substantial critique of Brit Art. Whilst rejecting the tag of "Marxist art critic," Stallabrass (cited in Honigman 2003) argues that "Marxist ways of thinking offer the most convincing analyses of capitalism and its cultural life."

212 The mainly White, twenty-something yBas included Jake & Dinos Chapman, Tracey Emin, Damien Hirst, Sarah Lucas, Sam Taylor-Wood, Gavin Turk, Gillian Wearing, Rachel Whiteread, and around twenty others.

production during the commercial art world's "hibernation," targeting future traders who would drive a bull market's inevitable return (Stallabrass 2007, no page numbers). As this art tendency upheld Modernism's tradition of valorising work created by singular 'geniuses', it maintained old forms of social exclusion by ignoring all other emerging British artists outside this clique. Digital media did not feature in the yBa repertoire, and, with few exceptions, neither did contemporary practices such as video art, audio work, or time-based performance. Instead the yBas produced commodities in readily collectible traditional formats such as painting, printmaking, sculpture, and the more recently acceptable forms of photography and mixed media installation. Many of these artworks incorporated material from the mass media, popular culture, and found objects, giving them an "accessible veneer" (Stallabrass 2006: 55). The yBas favoured salacious or controversial content as it hooked the media and "enrage[d] conservatives" (ibid. 9).[213] The "manufacture of marginality" is the art market's business (ibid. 82). While British punk had used comparable tropes to make political points, its modes of communication deliberately provoked the State and the captains of capitalism. In contrast, Brit Art was "drawn into the establishment at speed," using disturbing material as a ploy to attract patronage (ibid. 10).[214]

The banality of Brit Art is exemplified by its most commercially successful protagonist, Damien Hirst, infamous for his animal cadavers in formaldehyde-filled vitrines (ibid. 31). Hirst demonstrated that it was possible to make art "without an interior life" (ibid. 48). The "cipher" Hirst embodied became the Brit Art "brand" with its "unitary and fully knowable character" (ibid.). When art is thus reduced to an advertisement for little more than the artists themselves, the capacity for it to provoke either an intellectual or affective response in its audiences is called into question. This was art for financial rather than mental speculation.

High value commodity art invites us to consider the differentiated labour expended to both produce its material form, and to produce its notional value. Tycoon Hirst is an extreme example of entrepreneurial capitalism in information society.[215] Many of his

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213 Some criticisms directed at Brit Art had been foreshadowed by the Fluxus artist Dick Higgins's (1984: 18-19, emphasis added) earlier dismissal of the "dead" forms of Pop (and also Op) Art: "Pop art? How could play a part in the art of the future? It is bland. It is pure. *It uses elements of common life without comment*, and so, by accepting the misery of this life and its aridity so mutely, it condones them."

214 Although Brit Art predominantly impacted the British art market, this market sector did also link into a globalised and increasingly speculative financial system.

215 Although it is commonplace for artists engaged in public art commissions to subcontract out specialist fabrication, it is not normal practice for the production of gallery-based 'fine art'

signature works (pill cabinets, spin paintings) which in total fetched millions of pounds were made by casual labourers working at normal (low-paid) hourly rates, a paradox demonstrating that biopolitical labour can replicate seamlessly the social relations of segmented, hierarchical forms of labour.[216] Hirst has built his brand through a combination of strategic marketing (of the umbrella brand Brit Art and his specific brand of Damien Hirst) and the exploitation of a class of interchangeable workers whose labour value returns vast profits to the artist/intellectual property owner.

Unlike earlier coalescings of cultural expression into distinct art movements, Brit Art was not an avante garde, because no program existed, "only a certain arch positioning" (ibid. 54). Contrast this with the passionately expressed ideas which came together in Impressionism, Dada, Surrealism, Constructivism, and Futurism which challenged social and cultural mores while expanding modes of perception.[217] The yBas' apolitical stance invested their works with a nihilism in which the artists' underlying intent was unimportant, leaving viewers to derive their own meanings with few clues.[218]

It is pertinent that Brit Art's most consistent critic and historian, Julian Stallabrass (2007, no page numbers), has compared the yBa phenomenon with internet art, drawing out the differences between a system of cultural commodification and the perpetuation of social hierarchies with one of cultural decommodification and social democratisation. At the yBa's zenith during the mid-1990s, other artists such as Rachel Baker and Heath Bunting (also young and British, but outside the yBa cocoon) were

(although exceptions such as Jeff Koons exist). Hirst runs a type of Fordist production line in that he decides what what artistic fashion to manufacture, employs workers to carry out his specifications, then delivers the goods to market, where a supportive art infrastructure ensures high prices. Labourers are engaged for their manual competency, however unlike workers under the classic Fordist model, their wages would not be enough for them to purchase the products they manufacture, a similarity shared by workers in hi-tech factories. So although the marketing of Hirst is pure postindustrialism, the mode of production is late industrial.

216 Many of these precarious workers' contracts were terminated following Hirst's Sotheby's auction (Henry 2008).

217 These challenges to society were not necessarily always from the radical or progressive left; for example, Futurism became closely aligned with, and instrumentalised by, the forces of Italian Fascism.

218 Having repudiated theory (shorthand for postmodernism, poststructuralism, and other cultural and philosophical currents), the yBas appeared ambivalent about the possibility for general audiences to understand their work. However, the art was actually "a secret code" which only those involved, "theoretically adept insiders," could decipher, argues British art critic Matthew Collings (cited in Stallabrass 2006: 52, 62).

extending the possibilities of contemporary art though their exploratory use of the internet as a medium, notes Stallabrass (ibid.).[219] In contrast to the "constitutionally individualist" art world typified by Brit Art, much internet art has engaged with collective and/or anonymous identities, and relied on audiences to contribute content and collectively build frameworks of meaning (ibid.). These kinds of net art works can be likened to projects such as Reclaim the Streets which drew on "older art tactics—performance work and installation work, which, besides being cultural manifestos, are directly useful politically" (ibid.). Internet art often played a deliberately "dual role," insinuating itself into the cultural life of society without announcement, lending it a subliminal power to seed ideas not framed as art. In comparison, traditional art uses "safety nets" such as the gallery space with its "architecture, the labelling, the kind of deportment that's expected" to signify often ordinary objects as 'art' (ibid.).

To what extent was the Brit Art phenomenon a trigger for Furtherfield? As they were making art at the same time, Furtherfield's founders experienced first-hand Brit Art's lack of impact on cultural production. The yBas did not contribute innovative ideas to the thriving commons which was being driven from below. Catlow and Garrett (2007: 22) describe an above-ground British cultural scene "hijacked" by the same advertising company which had promoted the Conservative party (and conservative culture), paving the way for the 1979 election of the Thatcher government.

> Saatchi and Saatchi promoted art products from their own gallery under the populist brand of BritArt. Applying their marketing techniques and corporate power, the company accomplished a parallel coup within the British art scene, creating an elite of artists who embraced the commodification of their personalities alongside depoliticised artworks. BritArt's dominance of the 90s UK art world—its galleries, markets and press—with a small number of high profile artists, delighted nouveau toffs but disempowered the majority of artists. It degraded and smothered artistic discourse by fueling a competitive and divisive attitude towards a shrinking public platform for their practice and the representation of their work (Catlow & Garrett 2007: 22).

The cultural enclosures which Brit Art had helped build compelled other British

219 Baker and Bunting were prolific during this period, and many of their projects carried out under the "irational" (sic) umbrella remained archived or active until at least 2010. From the website: "IRATIONAL.ORG supports independent artists and organisations that need to maintain mission critical information systems. These 'Irationalists' create work that pushes the boundaries between the corporate realms of business, art and engineering."

artists to re-evaluate the “vibrant” underground scene of which they were a part, a milieu fed by “jungle music, cross cultural connections..., raves, art” (Garrett 2007).[220] People were taking control of their own culture and medium, and critiquing art culture and controlling hierarchies became a way to “hack around the issues” and “explore different ways of making art” (ibid.). Conceptual hacks generated material to make strange and different kinds of work, yet the cultural gatekeepers ignored this emerging “tradition.”[221]

The tradition spanned a gamut of activities and interventions, from pirate radio to sound art in the streets. These expressive forms shared similarities with the distinct yet complementary Situationist and Fluxus praxes, both which had arisen in the 1960s.

The Situationist Influence: Joyous Provocations of the Imagination

> If the ancient cry “Death to the Exploiters” no longer echoes through the streets, it is because it has given way to another cry, one harking back to childhood and issuing from a passion which, though more serene, is no less tenancious. That cry is “Life First!”
> —Raoul Vaneigem, 1967

Situationism was born in France, and rapidly attracted international interest from artists and cultural activists who shared its aims. Fifty years on it still inspires many. The movement aimed to analyse and then transform contemporary capitalist society, explains cultural theorist Sadie Plant (1992) in her comprehensive history *The Most Radical Gesture: the Situationist International in a postmodern age*. Capitalist society was an “organisation of spectacles: a frozen moment of history in which it is impossible to experience real life or actively participate in the construction of the lived world,” the Situationists declared (ibid. 2). Situationists departed from orthodox Marxism's puritanical path, and posited pleasure, play, and joyousness as strategic levers for a revolutionary social project. Imaginative provocations which resonated affectively were vital precursors to mass social action, and therefore needed to occur in the domain of the common. Accordingly, embalmed art in galleries and museums was irrelevant and impotent.

Subversive methodologies from the earlier European art movements of Dadaism,

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220 Of course, Brit Art was only one impetus, as creative and activist subcultures have evolved in response to a range of internal and external conditions (McKay 1998; Rimbaud 1998).

221 Music and experimental sound was better represented due to specialist publications such as *Wire*. Influential style magazines such as *The Face* and *i-D* covered emerging trends, but as ad-packed publications they accelerated the commodification of the elusive quality of 'cool'.

Surrealism, and Agit-Theatre were expanded upon by Situationists. They employed collages, manifestos, magazines, film, *dérives* (purposeful 'psychogeographical' drifts through urban environments), and *détournement* (inversion) of advertising and political materials to express their ideas. Over time these provocateurs developed a “more overtly political position from which its members gave full expression to their hostility to every aspect of existing society” (ibid. 1).[222]

The stimulation of critical awareness, shared public expressions of subjective experience, and the reintegration of art and poetry into every day life are political acts. The collective imagination's “radical demands” feed the construction of symbolic counter-spectacles to be enacted in public, shattering capitalism's hegemonic web of spectacles (ibid. 3). The movement experimented with other tactics, transitioning from “playing with components of a political party in the art field to becoming an anti-party component of the social movement,” explains philosopher and art theorist Gerald Raunig (2007: 179). In France and beyond, the Situationist approach of “brutal attacks on the society of the spectacle, and on the reformist left-wing, together with the old experiments with situation and dérive, provided tangible impulses for critique and forms of action in 1968” (ibid.).

Situationism belongs to the constellation of cultural and political movements which flourished across the world in the 1960s. Sooner than some other movements, it collapsed as a force after the extraordinary events of 1968.[223] The Situationists compared their role in the “long revolution” to that of “any group which expresses the poetic impulse: they must “supply a model for the future organisation of society” (Vanegeim 2001: 273). This would involve “guerillas” building a “parallel society” and self-managed “federations of micro-societies” to “counter the dominant system until such time as it is strong enough to replace it” (ibid.). As Situationist philosophy overtly challenges the logic of capitalism, the State on occasion has retaliated against its exponents with disproportionate force, most recently in France.[224]

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222 Artistic and ideological differences amongst the Situationists erupted around the tension between art and politics. However, as evidenced by their earliest tracts such as the *Contribution to a Situationist Definition of Play*, there exists an “unmistakable expression of this twofold and indivisible stake of action and representation in the situation. It is a matter of 'struggle', and 'representation:' 'the struggle for a life in step with desire, and a concrete representation of such a life'” (Raunig 2007: 178).

223 See Raunig (2007: 79-184) on Situationist interventions in the 1968 strikes and occupations. See also Touraine's (1977) reflections on 1968 France.

224 When these ideas are explored within social formations already monitored by the State security apparatus, the consequences can be extreme. The incarceration of the so-called

Situationism has contributed a critical framework for the analysis of capitalism, along with versatile tactics for Do it Yourself (DiY) activities. Enthusiasts have translated and widely circulated the works of the movement's protagonists, especially those of Guy Debord and Raoul Vaneigem.[225] The British anarcho-punk band and community which gathered together under the name and emblem of Crass is an example of a Situationist approach (although it was far more egalitarian in practice than the original incarnation of Situationism, driven by intellectuals, was).[226] In terms of electronic, digital, and network media, many art groups reflect a Situationist influence.[227] The impact of Situationist praxis on radical cultural thought manifests in Hakim Bey's (1985) TAZ concept and its countless embodied materialisations.

The Internet has fostered "activist art that adopts Situationist ideas and strategies," says Marc Garrett (2010: 61). This undefined art genre includes elements of game culture (computer games, multi-player net games, and board games) made by both artists and people who would not define themselves as artists. Such work defines "alternative territories for creativity," and challenges both "traditional approaches to

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'Tarnac 9' in France without trial on terrorism charges in 2008, for example, has been partially attributed to their possession and suspected authorial involvement in a revolutionary tract. Entitled *L'insurrection qui vient* (*The Coming Insurrection*) and compiled by the anonymous group Comité Invisible (2007), the tract embodies Situationist ideas, along with other political and philosophical influences. They urged people to "*Get organised in order to no longer have to work*," to reclaim time to unleash a "liberation of energy that no 'time' contains" (ibid., emphasis in original). See also Toscano's (2009) analysis of this tract and its authors' incarceration.

225 See, for example, Vaneigem (2001). Guy Debord's 1967 text *The Society of the Spectacle* has been called "one of the great theoretical works on modern-day capital, cultural imperialism, and the role of mediation in social relationships" ('Situationist International archives'). When Debord published *Commentaries on the Society of the Spectacle* in 1989, he commented that the "society of the spectacle had reached a new form, that of the integrated spectacle" (ibid.). Debord's (n. d.) 1973 film entitled *The Society of the Spectacle*, along with 4 other films from 1952-1978, is online at UbuWeb.

226 The autobiography by Crass's founder Penny Rimbaud (1998) documents Rimbaud's pivotal role in the emerging commune movement, through the early months of British punk to the Crass community's revitalisation of the flagging Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament Movement (CND) almost solely through its multi-experiential events staged around Britain.

227 Purposeful playfulness which transverses art and non-art arenas has been central to groups such as Innen, Bureau of Inverse Technology, Critical Art Ensemble, Electronic Disturbance Theatre, etoy, irational, Mongrel, RtMark, UBERMORGAN.COM, VNS Matrix, and The Yes Men (Deseriis & Marano 2003; Greene 2004; Richardson 2003).

politics" while also "re-setting the boundaries of art" (ibid.). Many artists incorporate "networked functionality and consciousness" into their work, and see "mainstream culture is as much a part of their medium" as are digital media and tools (ibid.). By adding "Situationist approaches" a "critical artform" emerges, crossing and connecting "genres and practices which infiltrate various areas of the everyday" (ibid.).

The Fluxus Influence: Building Systems for Playful Exchange

> Think that snow is falling everywhere all the time. When you talk with a person, think that snow is falling between you and on the person. Stop conversing when you think the person is covered by snow.
>
> —Yoko Ono 1963[228]

In the early 1960s few mechanisms existed for innovative creative practitioners to share their ideas across geographical and professional borders. To redress this situation, artists George Maciunas and Dick Higgins produced the magazine *Fluxus*, conceived as a "means of information exchange," rather than an "art style or movement" (Smith 2005: 119). An trans-Atlantic community of visual artists, composers, writers, performance artists, designers, and architects gravitated towards this publication as contributors/readers.

Fluxus has been described as a "network of ideas around which a varied group of artists have collaborated" (ibid.).[229] A key element linking Fluxus to our earlier theoretical reflections is collective communicative production. We can expand this out to a multiplicity of singularities (the creative individuals) engaged in the cooperative biopolitical production of the immaterial (ideas and their expression) via the organisational form of the network. Fluxus was conceived as, and continues to be, a borderless community, an open-ended philosophy, and a political attitude.

As Fluxus consciously evolved around "model-making and paradigm formation," it moved in a "philosophical vein" rather than pursuing the "dead-end solutions typical of the 1960s approach to art and technology" according to "Fluxartist" Ken Friedman (2002, no page numbers).[230] This philosophy tapped into the common, interweaving

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228 Part of the instructions from Fluxartist Yoko Ono's (no date) *Snow Piece*.

229 Smith (2005: 116-138) is a major historian of Fluxus.

230 Fluxartists took a considered stance vis-a-vis the hype around technology-driven art at the time. Some seminal "art and technology" groups and exhibitions arose in the 1960s in Britain, the United States, and Japan; these included the *Experiments in Art and Technology (EAT)* group/network, the *Art and Technology (A&T)* program of the Los Angeles County

ideas from Heraclitus, 14th century Zen Buddhist texts, amongst other sources of accreted wisdom. The ideas themselves were socially generative, attracting over time a larger community of people interested in social and cognitive transformation (ibid.).

Based in industrially-advanced nations, Fluxartists belonged to an emergent information society. Advertising and the mass media of radio and television delivered cultural commodities into urban and domestic spaces. In this pervasive informational environment which generated specific market-friendly affects, how relevant could art be to provoking other kinds of collective social imagination, especially if this art was walled off in special places, only to be experienced and purchased by an elite class? Echoing Situationist concerns, Fluxartists considered how society might be transformed by the "elimination of art as a special activity," (Smith 2005: 133).

Fluxus demonstrated that "systems of exchange" could be both a "communal practice" and "art forms themselves" (ibid. 131). Their "social performative frameworks" spanned the ephemeral (performances, festivals, happenings, anarchic tea parties, creative pranks), and the enduring (mail art, books, objects), and audiences were recast as "participants/users." Participatory projects encouraged interactivity, play, and the collective creation of meaning through experiences which primarily produced spaces for cognition.

Significantly, Fluxartists made fluxworks which resisted expropriation by markets. Made with "low-end mechanical processes...from mass-produced materials...[they] used materials that were disposable or had no value....and [were] sold at quite modest prices" (ibid. 125). These *anti-commodities* were collectively produced to disseminate ideas, not return monetary profits.[231] Fluxus was about transformation, and by de-privileging and decommodifying art its adherents challenged existing social hierarchies and the logic of capitalism.

Early Fluxus accounts prefigure the network society concept, with artist George Brecht describing Fluxus in 1963 as "an anational, rather than an international, phenomenon, a network of active points all equidistant from the centre" (cited in

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Museum of Art, and the *Cybernetic Serendipity* show in London. Friedman (2002 n. p.) argues that while "new paradigms engender new technology as well as new art, relatively few technologies have given birth to interesting art forms." Artists seduced by the "physical qualities of media" failed to consider the "potential of intermedia" (ibid.). Yet an artwork's "level of complexity" is "determined by philosophical paradigms" rather than by "available technology," an "important difference in a technological age" (ibid.).

231 However, the Fluxus network fully accepted that Fluxartists could maintain commercially viable individual careers outside of their Fluxus activities.

Smith 2005: 132). This “network-based paradigm of creative engagement” nurtured “interconnections among collectivity, art, creative production, and distribution” (ibid. 117). By rejecting Romanticism's “visionary and transcendent” frame, and Modernism's “professional and exclusionary praxis,” Fluxus opened up art to anyone interested (ibid.). In the Fluxus “desire to create a network for interactions between constituents” we sense a “glimmer of an information economy” (ibid. 133). Its “new social praxis” positioned art not as an “object for contemplation or consumption,” but as a “network...as a cognitive space and a communal structure” (ibid.).[232]

The success of Fluxus can be ascertained by the extent to which their models of cooperative production, exchange of ideas, and semi-directed play have entered the common realm. The themed early rave parties, the carnivalesque quality of counter-globalisation protests, the jubilatory atmospheres emanating from mass participatory events such as Reclaim the Streets, Critical Mass and Burning Man, and Mail Art's continuing circuits, all contain Fluxus elements.[233] Participants in these projects temporarily step outside of their ordinary lives and the market economy to co-inhabit more liminal states. We return from these liminal experiences refreshed, and through the “fusion process we hear, with a shock, our own voice speaking to us, our own age,” says Higgins (1984: 8). From this renewal we can ask the impossible.

The influence of both Situationism and Fluxus on Furtherfield becomes apparent as we examine its projects. But first we need to understand the immediate circumstances leading to the group's formation.

The Backspace Connection: The Importance of Hubs and Bases

In the 1990s Ruth Catlow and Marc Garrett belonged to an alternative cultural milieu which remained unacknowledged outside its own world although the aggregated ideas and outcomes impacted on British culture generally. They were aware of how the mainstream art sector contrived scarcity (of talent, ideas) to exclude people and maintain a cultural and social status quo. In a posting to the Rhizome mailing list Garrett (2001) explained that they formed Furtherfield to address this “problem” by promoting artists “for their own contexts, their own intentions, their own

232 This conceptualisation prefigures post-Autonomist ideas around the network form, particularly in its internet manifestation. The net's uber-network is a public “anthropological and cognitional environment” where cultural activists can liberate the results of “cognitive production” to trigger “real change” in the public imagination (Bifo 2003: 278).

233 See Carlsson 2002; Anonymous 1997; McKay 1998; 'What is Burning Man?' (n. d.).

independence."[234] Artists needed to question their own motivations which required them to consider the "function and structures of institutional control over creativity," (ibid.). Media gatekeepers ensured that the majority of art covered was regurgitated press releases, as "propaganda" is vital to marketing of artists, and those already in the fold were unlikely to "challenge the structure" (ibid.).

The Brit Art phenomenon had embodied info-capitalism's excesses. The "Creative Industries" push by New Labour circa 1998 consolidated art's normative functions in a post-industrial society.[235] This major government initiative connected to a rebirth of British popular culture and style which the national media had badged "Cool Britannia" (Clarke 1998).[236] It exploited the culture industries to reinvigorate a British economy which had experienced two recessions and the bipartisan erosion of social safety nets.

This was the political and social context in which Garrett and Catlow launched the Furtherfield website in 1996. The site's front page (now archived) unambiguously announced its intentions: "FURTHERFIELD colludes with critical poets, artists, troublemakers, sex maniacs & musicians to re-invent the worlds that straddle earthly and digital zones."[237] This "humble affair" showcased network-based art projects and published reviews of artworks that otherwise might have remained undocumented,

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234 The robust dialogue amongst various artists and curators on the Rhizome list thread in which Garrett (2001) commented was prompted by Rhizome's attempted commodification of hosted material, revealing how by that stage net art was no longer necessarily an uncontested territory of 'free culture'. Founded in 1996, Rhizome (2010) describes itself as "dedicated to the creation, presentation, preservation, and critique of emerging artistic practices that engage technology." It has generated periodic controversy within its community around issues of paid membership, net art commissions, and copyright. Its members have resisted Rhizome's attempts to privatise and monetise that which they consider as belonging to the common.

235 See Galloway & Dunlop (2007) for an historical analysis of the shift from Adorno and Horkheimer's construction of the "cultural industries" to Team Blair's rebranding of the "creative industries." The early rhetoric comes through in the *Creative Industries Mapping Document* (1998). The 2*009 Digital Britain Final Report* (Lord Carter 2009) is substantially larger, but covers the same ground. See also Charles Leadbeater's (2009) response, 'The Digital Revolution: the Coming Crisis of the Creative Class'. The visually compelling documentaries of auteur Adam Curtis (1999, 2007) provide an historically complex (and idiosyncratic) analysis of Britain's political economy from the 1960s onwards.

236 Tony Blair's "ideological adversaries Margaret Thatcher and Ken Livingstone" in very different ways did more than New Labour to create the conditions for a British cultural regeneration, argues Clarke (1998).

237 See <http://bak.spc.org/furtherfield>.

countering the processes of exclusion by London's “gated gallery spaces” (Catlow & Garrett 2007: 22). The Furtherfield website was initially hosted by Backspace, an informal production space situated in the Clink Street Prison precinct.

Backspace was the primary community hub for London artists and cultural activists engaging with digital technologies (Greene 2004). As the River Thames gentrification wave from Big Ben to Greenwich had not then devoured all the dilapidated pockets, this subscriber-funded, artist-run space benefited from its central location between London Bridge and Southwark Bridge, and the Thames-inducing “euphoria” (Fuller & Stevens 1999: 130).[238] Backspace had drawn inspiration from the creative Direct Action projects which had enlivened Britain throughout the 1980s and 1990s by connecting and mobilising people sharing cultural and political affinities.[239]

The metropolis is the built and social environment that supports the activity of the multitude, as it constitutes a “repository and skill set of affects, social relations, habits desires, knowledges, and cultural circuits,” argue Hardt and Negri (2009: 249). The emergent “*biopolitical city*” is a site of “unpredictable encounters among singularities (ibid. 251-2, emphasis in original). The “politics” of the metropolis is to “promote joyful encounters,” a task beyond the capabilities of capital (which can only “expropriate the common wealth produced,”) but suited to the multitude and its powers of autonomous organisation (ibid. 255-6).

The Backspace narrative grounds these theoretical propositions in social reality, as Armin Medosch's (2003, no page numbers) history of free networks demonstrates:

> Internet bandwidth was then very expensive and only businesses could afford a permanent high-bandwidth connection through a leased dedicated line. James Stevens, founder of Backspace, convinced his former colleagues in commercial website construction to share their 512k connection. Through this shared connection, Backspace enabled young artists to create their own internet-based works and experiment with audio and video live streaming over the internet. Live streaming from home was unthinkable at the time, no

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238 Backspace closed at end of 1999 (van Mourik Broekman 2000).

239 The electronic archives of the journal 'Do or Die: Voices from the Ecological Resistance' (no date) contain Direct Action reports of various eco-anarchist campaigns including the anti-roads movement, the anti-Criminal Justice Act, global days of action, and carnivals against capital over the period 1992-2003. These anonymously-written chronicles detail the heterogeneous underground, anarchist, and counter cultures which interconnected with British alternative arts and media cultures throughout that period.

> one could afford it. Backspace was run as a shared resource. The users were responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of infrastructure. People could go there to learn new programming tricks and share ideas about net art....The vibrancy of the place became well known across the networked scenes of Europe and further afield, while locally it soon became a focal point of the early net art scene.[240]

Backspace had issued an "unspoken challenge" to its members to "create something alternative" to the internet's "dominant commercial culture" (Catlow & Garrett 2007: 23). Accordingly people exchanged ideas and skills drawn from their experiences in "pirate radio and pirate television, digital bulletin boards and use of the streets as a canvas and art platform" (ibid.). Artists and activists could "hack around everyday culture using public communication platforms to create independent art works and publications" (ibid.). Furtherfield's early issues presented works precipitating a "lively and encouraging dialogue" amongst artists around the world, including those who participated on email lists "dedicated to the discussion of networked culture" such as Syndicate and Rhizome (ibid.).

Backspace highlights the crucial role that spatialised contexts play in the formation and support of creative networks and communities whose engagement is partially or primarily in the electronic sphere.[241] These networks and groups start local, but often over time attract non-local members drawn to both the material resources and the sense of community and kinship.[242] Backspace hosted a relaxed cyberlounge that welcomed both 'techies' and 'newbies'. Its wired-up event venue periodically hosted mini-conferences that advocated a "DIY consciousness" and encouraged users "to get

240 Medosch's (2003) London.ZIP essay written for the self-managed DMZ festival in London's East End in 2003 "mapped and compressed" London's synergistic media art scene.

241 Many cities will be home to comparable sites. As an Australian artist based in New York in 1998, The Thing NYC's warehouse space and servers in pre-gentrified Chelsea provided that physical and electronic home base for me. For over a decade I have paid The Thing an ISP-hosting fee for my net art projects. When I lived in Rome in 1999-2001 I witnessed how squatted social centres (*centri sociali*) such as Forte Prenestino performed comparable functions, and also had pioneered Bulletin Board Systems (BBSs) around which communities of interest coalesced. Bifo (2003: 276) describes such "social networks" as places where "commodification, exchange and daily life are protected from the final commodification." However, these proletarian community "residues" will not birth the future—instead this must come from a "process of recombination," Bifo (ibid.) argues.

242 I experienced Backspace's friendly atmosphere first hand in the late 1990s and witnessed how its community encouraged the sharing of ideas, skills, and resources.

their hands dirty with technology and its culture" (ibid. 22-23).[243] Backspace's electronic presence included the website **bak.spc.org**, a web server, and various mailing lists. In general, it applied the imperative of British software art group I/O/D (no date): "Software is mind control—get some."

Backspace's philosophy resonated with both Situationism (culture hacking) and Fluxus (systems of participatory production and exchange). Crucially, Backspace's self-managed material environment combined powerful internet resources, flexible work spaces, and discursive opportunities. Its social architecture influenced the kinds of creative work that were being collectively produced around Backspace. Art collectives such as I/O/D (n. d.) and Mongrel (2006b) pioneered the idea of "social software" at a time when festivals like Ars Electronica remained "dominated by old fashioned artificial intelligence and immersive goggle-wearing 'cyberspace' art, marred by an unquestioned proximity to the military industrial complex" (Medosch 2003, no page numbers).[244] The radical idea that software was a cultural artefact and a set of social processes arose from collective critique amongst a diverse user group participating in the Backspace mailing lists, the internet cafe, hosted events, and in the informal gatherings that brought together members of this loose-knit community.

Although both Brit Art and Furtherfield had both started as autonomously-organised practices by small clusters of artists, the first replicated capital's processes of expropriation and privatisation of the common, whereas the second challenged this logic by building inclusive, rebellious circuits of production and exchange, pushing the possibilities of electronic media and the internet. Both projects used social networks to further their aims, but whereas yBas imposed an elite hierarchy of stars/makers on top of the networks they exploited, Furtherfield, influenced by the praxes of Situationism and Fluxus, used the network form to broaden the base of cultural producers. Backspace physically anchored emergent makers and groups, constructing situations which manifested in material and electronic environments, producing the common. As people exchanged ideas, skills and resources, tight social bonds and loose networks developed.

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243 The speaker list at Backspace's *Secret Conference* series held throughout 1997 still reads like a Who's Who of the digerati. The aim was to assemble "international capital names and local disinvested bodies...for the purpose of discussion and progress." See Bunting (1997).

244 For example, I/O/D's critically acclaimed *Webstalker* software project provided an innovative interface to websites, stripping away all content, displaying only a dynamic visualisation of all hyperlinks. Thus Webstalker revealed the underlying network form of both individual websites and the meshwork of other websites to which they linked (Cramer 2005: 117-118).

In the following chapter section I examine two Furtherfield software art projects which exemplify the art of networks. FurtherStudio was a virtual artist-in-residency platform, while VisitorsStudio continues to enable online multimedia jamming. Both environments have supported creative cooperation, encouraged experimentation, and produced the social.

Part Two, Processes and Platforms

DIWO: Doing It With Others in Hard and Soft Spaces

> Doing is inherently social, what I do is always part of a social flow of doing, in which the precondition of my doing is the doing (or having-done) of others, in which the doing of others provides the means of my doing, doing is inherently plural, collective, choral, communal.
>
> —John Holloway, 2005

Furtherfield exists in the interstices between communication, social and cultural critique, and software art, with the internet being the project's primary enabling technology. The project has nurtured a network of creative practitioners involved in a range of emergent art forms. The growth of participation over the years demonstrates that Furtherfield is answering a need within this loose network for both an electronic space for talking, making, and being together, and a physical environment for embodied events. Between mid-2007 to late 2010 the number of participants contributing content to projects grew from 400 to 1800. Catlow and Garrett expect this number to soon increase "massively" after they launch their new website. The site **furtherfield.org** retains its focus on review, criticism, and discussion around art and networked practices. In 2007 around 16,000 annual people visited the website; in 2010 this had grown to over 140,000 visitors (R. Catlow, pers. comm. 16 November 2010). Guiding the evolution of many projects is the cooperative creative process which Ruth Catlow and Marc Garrett term "Doing It With Others."[245]

The contradictions, tensions, and connections amongst people exploring and building online processes and environments occur in the permeable zones of "hard space" and "soft space," suggested Graham Crawford, an early Australian electronic arts pioneer.[246] His nuanced hard/soft framing countered the "RL" (real life) and "VL"

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245 Furtherfield (2008a) is a portal into around 20 archived and current Furtherfield projects.

246 Crawford's (2000) projects and critical writings as a queer artist, activist, and curator in the 1990s foregrounded the inherent sociality of the internet. The affective dimensions and

(virtual life in cyberspace) debates by positing that our embodied and disembodied social interactions are equally real and authentic. The distinction is about where and how they manifest, in the *hard spaces* of life which are spatially and temporally anchored, and in the net's *soft spaces* formed by aysnchronous, geographically-dispersed, multi-vectorial channels. Although the internet and its access devices are more pervasive and socially embedded throughout post-industrial societies today than they were in the 1990s, the hard/soft distinction remains, augmented by the gooey space of the network.

Doing It With Others (DIWO) has further collectivised Punk's Do it Yourself (DiY) praxis, traversing hard and soft space, shuttling back and forth like a mechanical loom, unravelling and weaving patterns of thought in a constantly changing social fabric. In this instance, "It" stands in for art, and in particular (but not exclusively), network-based art. DIWO is simultaneously a core aim and core process guiding Furtherfield to construct participatory art platforms and set up situations which encourage collective social behaviours. Here is a strong Fluxus influence, as Fluxartists had similarly modelled creative modes offering a "communal, participatory, and open-ended alternative to the traditional forms and functions of art" (Smith 2005: 123).

Catlow's and Garrett's individual life experiences underpinned their shared interest in collective aesthetics and participatory art. Immediately prior to Furtherfield's inception the pair's "maker-led" experiments saw them exploring collective action with Bow Studios in London's East End, and initiating a community arts education work with seven culturally-diverse schools. Art school sculpture graduate Catlow (2007) had sensed the potential of "scale-free networks" as an artistic medium, and so shifted from making material objects to investigating that which "supported discourse as part of its medium."[247] From the outset they reclaimed the streets for creativity, with Catlow's "public gifting" of streets sculptures complementing Garrett's site-specific poetry, both practices opposing commodification of "unique objects" for "speculative markets" (Garret 2007).

The internet offers "worm holes" into hierarchical sectors (the arts and academia) and into various forms of "thought and practice" (Catlow 2007).[248] The net's

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potential within agents/avatars' interplay, and tensions within and between hard and soft space, formed a significant part of his lived research.

247 Garrett's experiences within Bristol's alternative scene similarly influenced his creative path, as will be discussed in Part Three of this chapter.

248 Catlow's worm holes are of the *Star Trek* variety, a mechanism to teleport oneself into different spatial and cultural locations, a little like *Alice in Wonderland's* rabbit hole portal.

architecture enables leaps into other networks and different cultures. However, once through the worm hole easy communication is not guaranteed, and so Furtherfield initiated projects to support a “certain sort of sharing behaviour” amongst social clusters (ibid.). One goal was to develop “artware,” defined as “software platforms for generating art” which rely on its users' “creative and collaborative engagement to make meaning” (Catlow & Garrett 2007: 22). Artware's constituents form a plural egalitarian body of those “formerly known as artists and their audiences” (ibid.). The mutual material generated could create a kind of meta-level art which represented the “actual engagements of being cooperative and negotiating the art itself” (Garrett 2007). Engagement with social issues, especially around network behaviour and process was critical.

What happens when play is returned to labour? A political critique of capitalism is implicit in those collective creative practices which reveal that culture is socially produced, continuously arising from, and returning to, the domain of the common. When the urge to play inhabits electronic networks, new categories of directed and improvisational play are enabled. This brings us to the newly designated category of “playbour,” a concept arising from analyses of fan labour in digital culture such as fan production of “mods” (modifications) and “machinima” in computer games (Kücklich 2005, no page numbers).[249] The outcomes of such “productive leisure” can be commercialised, not by the precarious 'playbourers' but by 'Big Content', the infotainment companies who own the intellectual property which is being modded. In contrast, artware production is a form of playbour whose fruits join the common.

Net art in itself is not inherently communitarian even if the internet is a natural fit with 'radical cooperation' and distributed authorship.[250] Rather than perpetuating a modernist situation where artists' egos created a hierarchy, Furtherfield experimented with breaking down individual identities within a group. They adopted the model of a horizontally-organised heterarchy in which participants could “create a flexible

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249 The nexus between play and labour has been extensively discussed on the Institute of Distributed Creativity's (iDC) electronic list between June-November 2009, starting with Trebor Scholz's (2009) post. The debate flowed into *The Internet as Playground and Factory* (2009) conference on digital labour in New York in mid-November 2009.

250 In fact, in the mid-1990s 'net.art' milieu valorised certain 'stars' in a comparable way to Brit Art's extolling of the hero artist. As an artist active in various media culture networks at that time I followed the debates around this valorisation, the self-aggrandisement of certain artists, and curators' and critics' complicity in fencing off the net.art scene's borders (see also Footnote 265). These discussions happened sometimes on lists such as Nettime, and more often off-lists amongst artists who felt discounted and marginalised by such practices.

economy of shared interests" and approach immediate issues directly (Garrett 2007). Despite the tendency for "certain natural hierarchies" to form, especially when an imbalance of technical skills exists within a group, heterarchical structures and consensus-based decisions offer a "more mutual way of working," creating new shapes beyond the "more rigid shape of patriarchy or hierarchy" (ibid.). Despite Catlow's and Garrett's insistence that they are not theory-driven, I suspect that theory is important to them, a theory arising from self-reflection upon their own practices.

The Furtherfield blog[251] embodies the DIWO principle, opening a discursive space focussed on "everyday practice" which encompasses curating and making art, and "just thinking about politics or culture" (ibid.). In contrast to media culture lists such as Nettime where the male voice tends to dominate, the Furtherfield blog is populated mainly by women.[252] The blog encourages deep listening as well as talking/writing, and involves an accretion of trust and shared understandings. Conversations run their natural course without being "stunted, just in case something of interest actually makes something happen it its own right" (ibid.). Even if an individual is annoyingly "political all the time," eventually people adjust and produce "interesting *works of thinking* or art within that context" (ibid., emphasis added). The work of ensuring inclusiveness is an ongoing yet under-acknowledged dimension of the affective labour which animates network culture.

DIWO projects provide a context for people to discover the "artist in themselves" and see themselves as "contributors to a culture," rather than "makers of product... [for] the speculative market" (ibid.). Catlow (2007) and Garrett frequently replace the word 'artist' with 'user', although this would be different if they could hold on to the "Beuysian[253] notion of the artist." Furtherfield's conviction that everyone can contribute to cultural life echoes the post-Autonomist idea that all humans share a "communicative capacity" making them "virtuoso[s]," performing a "score" which is

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251 See (Furtherfield 2010). The first blog posting was made in September 2004.

252 Nettime has been an important autonomously-organised aggregator of news and critical discourse and builder of a network/community through its mailing lists on "networked cultures, politics, and tactics." However, the rarefied nature of many postings probably deters many people from doing more than 'lurking' on the list. A scan through the archives reveals a heavy gender imbalance, and one might suspect other imbalances (including class and ethnicity). See 'nettime mailing list' (2010).

253 A reference to the influential German artist Joseph Beuys (1921-1986) who declared that everybody is an artist. In contrast, Brit Art's legacy was to associate the term 'artist' with "celebrity, hardcore drug taking, self-centred, navel-gazing, selfish, arrogant, completely uncritical" (Catlow 2007).

simply the “infinite potential of one's own linguistic faculty” (Virno 2004: 65-66).[254]

Furtherfield link DIWO to the DIY ethos of early net art and tactical media. Peers collaborate on building their own structures via both digital networks and physical environments, in order to create and distribute art across a network (ibid.). Engagement with social issues happens simultaneously with the “reshaping” of art and wider culture, as people build critical perspectives (Catlow & Garrett 2007: 26) Because social 'stuff' is being built, communities form around DIWO projects. Within a communal space constituted by physical and virtual networks, people share visions, resources, and “agency,” which feeds critical consciousness and the possibility of a “decent life” (ibid.). Here is a hint of a constituent multitude, agency developing from organic communicative processes.

Furtherfield's commitment to 'doing' with others and their attention to group processes can be considered through Holloway's lens of the transformative potential of doing. The inherent sociality of doing both connects us to past lineages of doing, and can generate a spectrum of affective states which can be shared locally and transmitted outwards. Doing produces new collective identities constituted around localised and generalised struggles. This “social flow of doing” does not “deny the materiality of the done,” but connects the done with all that has made its realisation possible (Holloway 2005: 27). There is a “community of doing, a collective of doers, a flow of doing through time and space....our doings are so intertwined that is is impossible to say where one ends and another begins,” asserts Holloway (ibid. 26).

Collective doings are motors of change transforming how people create (art, software, learning situations, community gardens, journalism) until the point that solitary production seems anachronistic and somewhat joyless. These motors can drive more radical change, as people collectively place their bodies into contested zones (reclaiming the streets, university occupations, climate camps) forcing struggles into public awareness. Although the short-term material outcomes of collective doings might fall short of their driving visions, each doing changes the world in subtle or overt ways, and joins an accretion of collective action which can have a long-term impact.

Perhaps for the first time in history, a “vast area of activity directed towards changing the world that does not have the state as its focus, and that does not aim at gaining positions of power” exists (ibid. 21). This swarming activity of collective doing

254 The Situationist Raoul Vanegeim (2001: 191) similarly concluded that authority can only deal with those forms of creativity “which the spectacle can co-opt.” However, formally-recognised art pales in comparison with what people do “in secret,” and with the “creative energy displayed by everyone thousands of times a day” (ibid.).

is enabled by global communications networks, and the partial dissolution or weakening of traditional barriers between groups (class, race, gender, ideology), enabling the "projection of a radical otherness" (ibid.). Today old distinctions between "reform, revolution and anarchism" seem irrelevant because the "question of who controls the state is not the focus of attention" (ibid.). In this world view, both doing nothing and playing can be political acts, Holloway asserts.

> Doing...includes laziness and the pursuit of pleasure, both of which are very much negative practices in a society based on their negation. Refusal to do, in a world based on the conversion of doing into work, can be seen as an effective form of resistance (Holloway 2005: 24) .

How might artware encourage collective doings? The struggle against capitalism includes subtractive actions such as the refusal of work, and additive ones such as creating temporary autonomous zones and building free software, says Bifo (2003: 278), as these contribute to the "dynamic recombination" enabling people to discover their own "space of autonomy" and in so doing "push capitalism towards progressive innovation." If our doing is "*always* part of a social flow of doing, even where it appears to be an individual act" as Holloway (2005: 28, emphasis in original) contends, can software reveal and help evolve sociality? The FurtherStudio project built artware to publicly reveal the normally alienated flow of doing.

Social Software: FurtherStudio

> A large part of what we see artists doing...is doing things for their own sake, for what is intrinsically interesting in it and for the sharing of their experience. It is then incumbent upon us...the audience, to establish a dialectic between what the artist seems...to be doing and what we choose, if anything, to contribute to that process to the ends of our own enrichment and of really experiencing our own identities in relationship to what the artist is doing.
>
> —Dick Higgins, 1984

FurtherStudio was an "exploratory" project run over twelve months in 2003-2004 in which three UK-based artists undertook "online, real-time, net art residencies" responding to the curatorial theme of "appropriation and ownership of ideas, services, products and images."[255] The three-month residencies mirrored key aspects of

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255 All quotes in this paragraph came from the project website's entrance portal, 'Furtherstudio' 2003, viewed July 2 2009 <http://www.furtherstudio.org/online>. The Furtherstudio archive

physically-emplaced residencies (such as open studio events), and hosted discussions amongst “artists, net art critics, and anyone interested in exploring creativity on the Internet.” Yet unlike traditional residencies requiring relocation to institutional environments, the artists worked from their normal studios, with FurtherStudio's customised web platform offering a “public window on the artist's PC desktop.”

The FurtherStudio project evolved from online conversations with Jess Loseby, a “very reflective practitioner” who makes “very beautiful...emotional work” (Catlow 2007).[256] Loseby, based in rural south England, first met Marc Garrett on the previously mentioned Rhizome mailing list. As their email friendship developed, Loseby expressed her frustration about the lack of responses to her Rhizome postings. This silence might have been because Loseby was a “newbie, or a woman, or because her response was coming from somewhere slightly different,” suggests Catlow (ibid.), a point others have made about list cultures in general.[257] Loseby's experiences prompted a Furtherfield team of Catlow, Garrett, and artist/programmer Neil Jenkins to address the problem.

Furtherstudio is a form of *social software,*[258] as it had been build by programmers responding to specific users' expressed desires.[259] Social software design exceeds the

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is now offline because Furtherfield had inadvertently failed to renew the domain name, a not uncommon problem in network culture (R. Catlow, pers. comm. 16 November 2010). Furtherstudio artists were Jess Loseby, Richard White, and 'Replic**t'; their artworks and projects archives were linked from the project’s portal.

256 Loseby (2009) maintained a website hosting her net art projects and installation documentation until ill health forced her to take it down. A notice on the website advises that she plans to create an archive and new work area when possible.

257 A post by John Hopkins (2009) on the [iDC] list's thread entitled 'The difference between community and voices' argued that many media cultural lists are so dominated by a handful of “BIG voices” that other members feel silenced by these “powerful authorial voices” and thus the “utopia of pluralism” promised by the internet has not come to pass. Instead, list dynamics perpetuate “a subtle form of social control.” On the same thread Critical Art Ensemble member Lucia Sommer (2009) identifies the “gender dynamics involved in the question of 'big' and 'small' voices.” A “dynamic” exists on many lists in which women's contributions “tend to be overlooked / ignored,” as are those of list newcomers. Sommer concludes that because people find this “discouraging,” they “focus their energy elsewhere, thereby diminishing the multiplicity of voices on a list.” More recently on [iDC], Anne Balsamo (2010) has noted that unpleasant experiences of being “flamed” or verbally bullied on a list can cause people to withdraw from this form of online communication.

258 Fuller spoke about 'social software' years before this term had been appropriated by social networking platforms such as MySpace, Facebook, Flickr, and Twitter.

259 As the subsequent artists had different approaches to their work, the technical team

individualised labour of writing code, although this is part of the process. It also entails cooperative, communicative, immaterial labour in the form of linguistic exchanges between programmers and future users, as Neil Jenkins' (2008) account below reveals:

> Jess Loseby is in a wheelchair and so it would be very difficult for her to use a physical studio environment to do a residency. She also has children as well, so there'd be immediate problems for her going off...while she's looking after kids, and cope with working within a studio space, and accessibility... So we came up with this idea of creating an online studio for her... Her work was mostly net-based anyway...we talked about the different ways that people could interact with her as part of an online residency... One of the major ones was being able to take a screen shot of her desktop as she was working, and uploading that to the server in real time. Anybody visiting her residency online...would actually see her screen and what she was working on—putting together an animation or drawing out some designs. We created this interface that was the artist's desktop which [also] had a chat box. So if the artist was online you'd be able to talk to her...as she was working. It also had two archives: one for work...in progress, where she'd publish work as she was putting things together, and another [for] work which was complete. Both [archives] played through this visual desktop interface.

Loseby worked with the team for one month beta-testing the software. This gave the residency a "real sense of place" because although it was "virtual" Loseby (2003) always felt like she was "working in a studio."[260] Her continuing sense of emplacement throughout the residency is especially remarkable given that Loseby only met the team once "in real space" (ibid.). For a "wheel chair user," the residency was "groundbreaking...breaking down barriers, globally & physically...no more time and place hurrah!" (ibid.).

FurtherStudio revealed the usually hidden technical and social processes of art production. It is paradoxical that a virtual residency environment could do this, because artists in materially-emplaced residencies are typically cloistered, with their output not public until an open house event or closing exhibition. In contrast, FurtherStudio visitors could enter (log into) the "live studio space" at set times to

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"redeveloped and rejigged" the artware's interface accordingly (N. Jenkins 2008).

260 Source: Online chat transcript, Loseby, J., Blackhawk, Andrews, J., Golan, D. & et. al. 2003, *Archive of FurtherStudio Critical Forum with Jess Loseby*, viewed July 3 2009 <http://www.furtherstudio.org/online/fs_jess_cf.html>. This source is now offline.

communicate with the artist and experience the unfolding digital material (Jenkins 2008). The live studio was an “engagement between audience and artist” which might influence artist's work or the reverse, “where the artist could influence the audience perception of their work” (ibid.). Sometimes the chat room was “like a dance...people coming and going,” allowing Loseby (2003) to share her “creative energy.” The artware opened up affective dimensions for participants. It is highly likely that the finalised artworks became “less important” than the process giving rise to them, the “act of creating,” as the Situationist Vanegeim (2001: 202) has argued in a different context.

Loseby's artwork entitled *bob@nowhere.tv* comprised 22 emails from the artist to 'bob', a fictional avatar.[261] Its theme was Loseby's “relationship with the fictitious or the imagined other, the audience for her work, but as a lover,” exploring the “frustrations and...difficulties of communicating with an audience that you never hear from, or see, or necessarily get a response from” (Catlow 2007). Like many avatars, bob developed his own personality, starting well enough, but soon becoming “rather moody and judgemental,” reflecting Loseby's (2003) ambiguous “relationship with the net.”

Loseby animated emails in Flash (a proprietary animation software) and embedded them in a series of web pages as a composition of interrelated ideas. Her “distributed narrative” engendered an “air of mysterious monumentality, like finding some [Mayan] stelae overgrown by jungle,” according to New York-based artist/critic Blackhawk. He experienced it “more like architecture.”[262] Futherfield had given Loseby a “free run from its pages & contributors” which Loseby likened to “running round a gallery with scissors” as she gleaned text, images, sounds, icons, and texts. Virtual visitors also sent her files. As she listened to the radio “half heard fragments of news, songs and conversations” inveigled themselves into the artwork (see Figure 8 on page 205).[263]

A “Critical Forum” involving Jess Loseby and three invited artists and critics—Blackhawk, Jim Andrews, and Doron Golan, occurred via Internet Relay Chat (IRC) on 13 November 2003. [264] Following the panellists' semi-structured discussion, online visitors could join the discussion. The conversation moved through various registers, from art criticism to spontaneous riffing, as redacted segments demonstrate.

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261 This project remains online. See Loseby (2003).

262 See Note 260 for source of quotes in this and subsequent paragraphs.

263 For example, the page at http://www.no-where.tv/puppet.htm features dancing puppets George Bush and Tony Blair dancing to a Broadway song, referencing the then-recent invasion of Iraq by the 'Coalition of the Willing'.

264 Comparable dialogues occurred during the subsequent two residencies.

Figure 8, Furtherstudio artist Jess Loseby's 'bob@nowhere.tv'

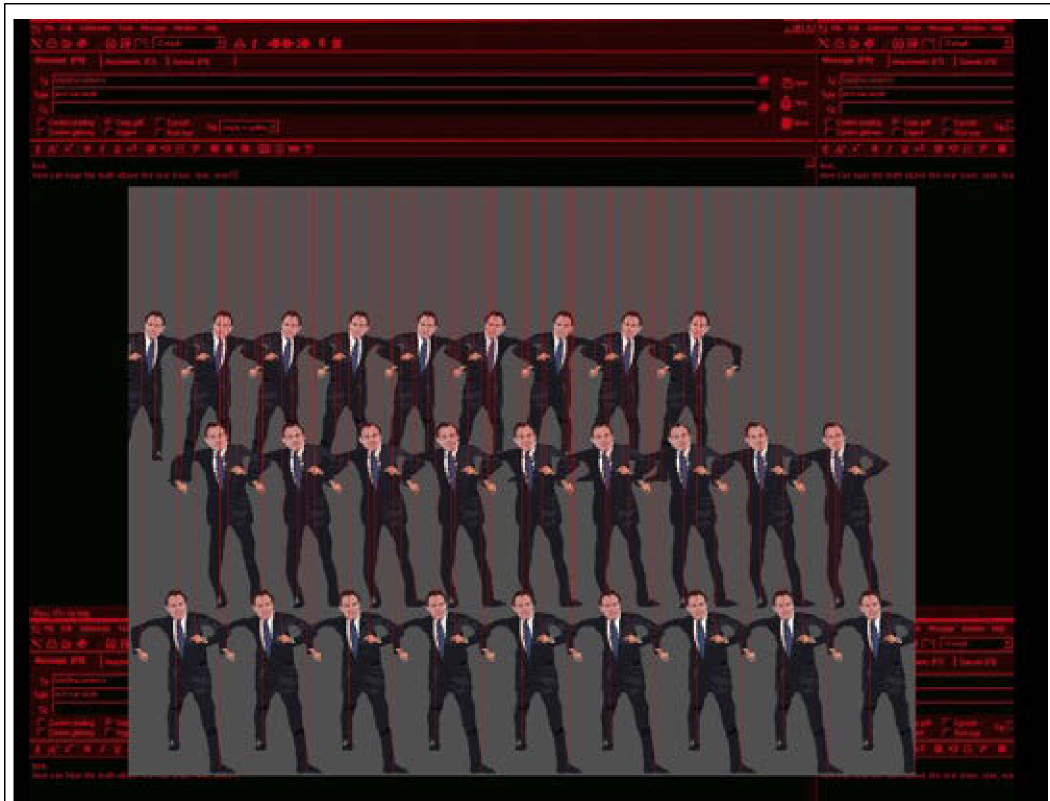

Figure 8: Screen capture from animation sequence in 'bob@nowhere.tv' artwork. Image courtesy Jess Loseby.

From the “Critical Forum” chat:

> **JA :** i'm struck with the quality and volume of the work you've been making with flash, Jess, a mix of writing and image, animation, interactivity
> **Jess :** I have to say I love flash even though many find it annoying and 'not net'...it suits my slapdash tendencies.
> **Blackhawk :** I too was struck by the range in media.
> **Doron :** it's promoting sensibility from that rough tool that counts.
> **Jess :** I have a very hostile relationship with tech, generally and I would like to be able to just plllllaaaaayyyyy :)
> **Blackhawk :** don't you think play exists in that space between ignorance & mastery?
> **Jess :** & between the net & the 'real'
> **JA :** between the reality and the shadow
> **Doron :** art-not art

One marker of “social software” is that it is “born, changed, and developed as the result of an ongoing sociability between users and programmers in which demands are made on the practices of coding that exceed their easy fit into standardised social relations,” states Matthew Fuller (2003: 24) in his book *Behind the Blip: Software as Culture*. Furtherstudio fits clearly into this categorisation, both in its genesis and its evolution. The critical fora for each residency covered the artwork's development, and the online context, feedback which influenced subsequent iterations of the artware.

The FurtherStudio project embodies “structures of cooperation” (Catlow & Garrett 2007: 24). These structures could be experienced not only in the artwork outcomes of each residency, but even more so in the publicly-accessible archives of raw elements, works-in-progress, and IRC logs. Loseby's virtual residency log files and artwork made it apparent that although she was the author of its the work's original concept and execution, cooperative linguistic, artistic, and technical processes had helped to shape the project. These processes were immanent to the software platform. Art's social dimension, the mechanics of doing it with others, the particularised incidence of the general intellect, were thus transparently and continually revealed rather than being opaquely and temporally fixed in the finished object.

Furtherfield welcomed isolated net artists in from the cold. While in the 1990s network art's evolutionary precursor, net.art, had advanced a Modernist position that creativity was a matter of individual brilliance, the participatory network culture which

Furtherfield fostered revealed the social nature of production within the medium.[265] To Loseby (2004) they sent the “overwhelming message” that her work was appreciated. Reflecting on her Furtherstudio experience, and participation in Furtherfield's now annual Network Party—that “happy riot” of “beer, cheese and an obscene number of laptops”, Loseby (ibid.) noted that what distinguished Furtherfield from other creative art web nodes was its recognition that

> artists are facilitated not through the establishment of lifeless structures (over which they compete) but the provision of networked lifelines. Stable islands from which artists can look around, gather together and jump back into the datastreams

Contemporary instances of network culture can feed into a parallel economy in which people work towards democratic outcomes (see Lovink 2009). A system of collective knowledge production dismantles the traditional roles of producer/artist, distributor/publisher/vendor, and audience/consumer, making it clearer that culture is socially produced. And so art fulfils its Fluxus promise, becoming “not an *object* for contemplation or consumption, but a network...a cognitive space and a communal structure” (Smith 2005: 134). We now see how these ideas manifest in VisitorsStudio, an artware whose roots extend back to the Bristol experimental music scene.

Software as Culture: VisitorsStudio

> ...it is this paradox, the ability to mix the formalised with the more messy—non-mathematical formalisms, linguistic, and visual objects and codes, events occurring at every scale from the ecological to the erotic and political—which gives computation its powerful effects, and which folds back into software in its existence as culture.
>
> —Matthew Fuller, 2008

Software is more than a clustering of programming languages, communication protocols, and technical cludges, as it carries with it an array of histories—cultural,

265 In 1998 the self-professed founders of net.art proclaimed the death of net.art. Their territorialisation of a genre had attempted to build an exclusive canon in which innovative net projects by others did not feature. One of the “fathers of net.art,” Vuk Cosic, claimed that this small clique were the “first guys around to ask the big questions, to give some of the answers if we can...that’s a role of pioneers and we have given the world the whole palette of genres. You can not find today a piece of online art that is not somehow rooted to what we have done between 1994 to 96’...” See Hustic (2008). Perhaps they were being ironic, but the consistency of their pronouncements suggested otherwise.

political, economic, and scientific (Fuller 2003; Cramer 2005; Kelty 2008). Comparing software to literature, Cramer argues (2005: 122) that just as literature includes "all [the] cultural practices it involves—such as oral narration and tradition, poetic performance, cultural politics," so too software is "both material and practice." The material of software is code, just as the material of literature language. Both materials need to be executed in order to produce something: software is run, and language is written, spoken, or sung. Moving to the cultural practice of software, this would include development histories and genealogies, political and economic machinations, and individual desires and collective visions. As we examine the materiality and sociality of VisitorsStudio, the proposition that software is culture gains real traction.

The performative realm of the internet offers a site to experiment afresh with Fluxus ideas around chance and play,[266] and VisitorsStudio provides a means for this. VisitorsStudio refers both to the software program itself, and also to the web portal **www.visitorsstudio.org** that links to an archive of previous projects made with the software.[267] The software has some "unique" features in that it is a multimedia format which can display images, run video, play sounds, mix collages of audio-visuals, and enable text-based chat, all happening on the fly over the net (N. Jenkins 2008). In this egalitarian space anybody can "collaborate or collude with anybody else" logged on at the same time (ibid.). Visitors can either use the software to experiment by themselves or with others, explore the archive of saved mixes, or chat. Thus VisitorsStudio is simultaneously a production tool, a performance platform, a library, and a social environment.[268]

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266 The "research program" of the Fluxus "laboratory" focussed on twelve ideas: "globalism, the unity of art and life, intermedia, experimentalism, chance, playfulness, simplicity, implicativeness, exemplativism, specificity, presence in time, and musicality" (Friedman 2002, no page numbers).

267 Originally the VisitorsStudio blog was the portal into the entire project, but currently elements of the project are dispersed between an old and new website. Immediate access is via <http://www.visitorsstudio.org>. Sub-pages include the VisitorsStudio blog (Furtherfield 2004a), platform (Furtherfield (2006a), and archive of VisitorsStudio events and mixes from 2005-2006 (Furtherfield 2006b).

268 The artware's various modes were immediately apparent to me when I first used it during Neil Jenkins' Dorkbot presentation in Sydney in May 2008. Dorkbot itself exemplifies autonomously-managed self-education, cooperative exchange and community building, and recalls Ivan Illich's (1996) learning networks. This self-organised network of "people doing strange things with electricity" attracts FLOSS geeks, wireless network activists, community radio makers, and artists in sound, visuals, performance, and intermedia, to periodic gatherings around the world ('dorkbot' n. d.).

VisitorsStudio, like Furtherstudio, is a specific instance of the generalised field of social software. Social software is “built by and for those of us locked out of the narrowly engineered subjectivity of mainstream software” (Fuller 2003: 24). Few accounts exist which document how social softwares are built, although there are numerous chronicles of the development histories of key FLOSS and proprietary programs and operating systems (Moody 2001). Such material histories might reveal the differentiated techno-social processes which produce not only different forms of digital goods but also constitute different kinds of communities of cultural activists, hackers, and users. Presumably these histories would confirm the iterative nature of software design in general, whereby programmers traditionally incorporate the cognitive labour of countless others. Programmers locate, use, add to, and customise code libraries and modules to save them writing thousands of lines of original code. In turn, they generally release their code developments back to a digital commons via specialised mailing lists and websites.[269]

Three interrelated trajectories feed into VisitorsStudio's genesis. In part it grew out of FurtherStudio. However, its roots extend back to Bristol in the late 1990s, when Neil Jenkins had created a series of animation elements to be projected as a backdrop for live music gigs performed by Roger Mills and his group Eledua (2002). Jenkins had written a sub-program in Director[270] which could control ten separate visual layers via a stand-alone computer. Jenkins and Mills sensed that this scripted animation controller could be used in networked-based performance contexts. Additionally, the cross-pollination of ideas and code played a role, with artist group entropy8zuper (Michaël Samyn and Auriea Harvey) being especially influential.[271]

269 This tendency is not only particular to the twin fields of free and open source software, but also occurs with proprietary software, raising the vexed issue of software patents.

270 Director was an expensive, relatively user-unfriendly proprietary authoring software used by interactive media artists and software game developers in the 1990s.

271 Michaël Samyn (in Ghent) and Auriea Harvey (in New York) belonged to the *hell.com* community, an early net art network.

> Michaël created a piece called Wirefire which he then presented to Aria as a way of helping them to communicate as they'd been communicating using some very low level CU-SeeMe camera and audio equipment. From this project Wirefire they would produce an online performance every Thursday night at midnight...where they'd mix visual files for the audience... The audience weren't immediately visible but they rigged up a mechanism whereby everybody who was in the audience became a speck of dirt on their screen. So it had this lovely thing where they could perform and at various points in time a dialogue box would open up and you could type in and everybody else could see what you were typing (N. Jenkins 2008).

To refine VisitorsStudio's “smorgasbord of ideas” Jenkins invited entropy8zuper and other multi-user interface users to beta-test VisitorsStudio. While Neil Jenkins (2008) did all the programming, it felt like a “collaborative enterprise” as people ascertained how to visualise participants' presence via cursors appearing on the screen. Testing sessions were often fun, with “everybody...going crazy with cursors moving all over the screen and typing, and it looked like people were dancing” (ibid.).

Let us examine in more detail how the software functions, starting with its interface. The platform comprises a website interface, and a user-accessible database of stored media files. People enter the website and either log in as a registered user or as a guest (see Figure 9 on page 211).[272] A VisitorsStudio mixing session can incorporate a maximum of eight layers of digital media. Each layer contains either an audio track (compressed as an MP3 file), an animation (saved as a SWF file), a digital video (saved as a MOV file), or an image file (compressed as a JPG file). These digital elements are mixed in real time to create a dynamically-changing audio-visual session.

Each file type has variable attributes associated with it which can be manipulated online in real time by the user who is controlling that layer of the collage. For example, image file variables include opacity, positioning, scaling, and rotation; sound file variables include volume levels, and left-right panning. Participants can manipulate variables in a mindful way, sensitive to how others are playing in the shared electronic space, a feature recalling Fluxus principles of interaction.

Each layer can be treated individually, and each mix of a maximum of eight layers can be saved online as one compiled object. Users can then re-use this compiled object as one element of a future mix (illustrating the software's reiterative and recursive nature). Each saved mix from a jam or performance has a specific web address (URL), enabling future audiences to experience past sessions.[273] This time-machine quality reflects the software's connections to the fields of sound arts and music where recordings of live sessions and jams are commonplace (see Figure 10 on page 211).

VisitorsStudio is a low-bandwidth tool, designed to work with 56K modems, that is, dial-up connections and slow broadband speeds. This technical choice demonstrates the team's commitment to social software principles as it enables participation by people

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272 Registered users have more privileges than guests as they can add new material to the database, whereas guests can only play with existing materials.

273 “Within the website there is an archive of every single mix ever saved and every time we did a performance in the space those were also archived. So there's a method of playing back both single visual mixes or a session where you've got an hour long set of mixes by various people” (Jenkins 2008). The archive function was built for *DissensionConvention*.

Figure 9, Entrance to VisitorsStudio

Figure 9: Screenshot of Entrance to VisitorsStudio. Image courtesy Furtherfield.

Figure 10, Screen capture from VisitorsStudio mix

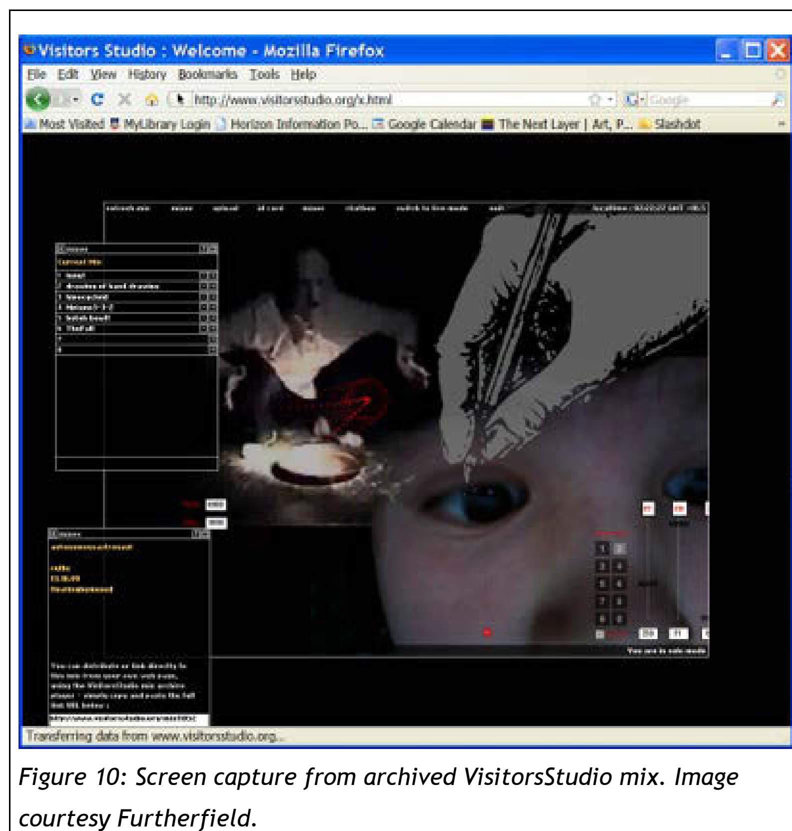

Figure 10: Screen capture from archived VisitorsStudio mix. Image courtesy Furtherfield.

who might lack access to fast internet connections. It is a design sensitivity which contrasts with developer assumptions about user demographics of bandwidth-greedy proprietary platforms such as YouTube. While accessibility comes at a cost as it restricts file sizes of input data (for example, image files must be under 200 kilobytes), such restrictions challenge users to develop aesthetics suited to the medium.

VisitorsStudio is coded so that when people use its LiveStudio option (for collaborative mixing with others logged on at the same time) they automatically share bandwidth and mixing channels. That is, a participant logging into LiveStudio can only control one out of the eight possible mixing channels, a deliberate limitation preventing any single player from dominating the collective mix with only their media files.[274] This unique feature again reflects a social software approach. However, people logging in to VisitorsStudio's solo player mode can utilise all eight channels.

Turning now to the code level of VisitorsStudio, the platform's back end is written in Perl, Jenkins' preferred language. It incorporates a MySQL database for the sessions and mixes. MySQL is written in a mixture of PHP and Perl.[275] The front end, that is, the web interface, is written in Flash with an HTML wrapper. Programmer Andy Forbes handled the PHP and Jenkins the Perl, and the two streams gradually dovetailed. Over time the project's circuits of cooperation both broadened as it expanded from being very small with many people "giving input" to having various programmers working on discrete sections (N. Jenkins 2008). The Arts Council subsequently funded the Version 1.0 build. As more people code, new features and upgrades become easier to manage.

User feedback, in conjunction with artists' interests in using the software in new ways, have guided programming priorities, as Jenkins (ibid.) explains:

> We added on the facility to record sessions, so we could lock the

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274 Players can either enter Live Studio anonymously or as a registered user, the difference being that registered users can upload their own media files into the mix, whereas anonymous users must use pre-existing files stored in the VisitorsStudio archive.

275 Perl is a widely used "postmodern," "adaptive" programming language written by Larry Wall, and released under the GPL (Richardson 1999). Its history demonstrates the cooperative nature of software development. According to its website MySQL is the "world's most popular open source database software, with over 100 million copies of its software downloaded or distributed." See 'About MySQL' (no date). PHP is a widely-used scripting language especially suited for Web development. Its history exemplifies how a one person project made the transition to a multi-developer, cooperative free software project (The PHP Group, no date).

> [virtual] studio off from everybody being able to change the existing mix, and invited one or two or three artists to collaborate on the mix so everybody else could come and watch. Each time they saved a media file in its position or panning or volume on-screen, that would then record that to the mix and how long it had been since the last person had a saved a file into the mix. So you effectively had a session that you could replay back in real time.

The programming team then extended the software's functionality by considering its potential social contexts. Consequently, they produced a booking system, with Andy Forbes building a database back end to support an events calendar. Chris Webb, the programmer who had built the first Furtherfield and Furthernoise sites and had worked on VisitorsStudio's login screens, created Help pages.

VisitorsStudio has been used for numerous events including sound art and net radio projects.[276] For example, Furtherfield collaborator Roger Mills first used VisitorsStudio to conduct a multimedia interview with composer Jodie Rose on Furthernoise's internet radio channel. For her *Singing Bridges* project Rose mikes up bridges around the world with the eventual intention of creating a “bridge symphony” (R. Mills 2008). During the interview Rose uploaded images of the various bridges she'd played and recorded, and the pair conducted a text-based interview. People around the world joined them to “watch the flow of text” (ibid.).

Can software have an affective dimension? Audiences behave differently in VisitorsStudio special events, Neil Jenkins (2008) noticed, with the software creating its own “set of ethics.” When a performance was occurring “people would actually hang on the outside of the screen with their cursors, just so they weren't obscuring the view” (ibid.) Participants (both 'performers' and 'audience members') in some of the more

276 It has also been used as a tool for learning the art of digital mixing. For example, the Bristol Bronx Youth AV Workshops coordinated by Furthernoise linked up a group of 16-20 year olds associated with the Watershed, Bristol (Britain's first media centre) with peers from the Point Youth Centre in the Bronx, New York, over two weekends in March 2006 (Furtherfield 2008b). Furthernoise had no desire to be a semi-commodified training service provider, parachuting into socially marginalised environments to provide community uplift, which can be the case with the 'social work pole' of the arts spectrum. Rather fun, experimentation, and exchange were encouraged, introducing participants to live video set ups and pairing them into small working groups. The youth created material which they then mixed in real time on the final workshop day. The cross-cultural collaboration fused “dialects and slang,” with both groups “learning off each other” (Mills 2008). The Bristol youth focussed mainly on the music, and the Bronx participants made images, with the fusion working “brilliantly” (ibid.). The streamed works were captured and later published in a DVD.

formal VisitorsStudio events had a “sense of themselves off-screen and they would often not talk between the performances as well,” Roger Mills (2008) recalls. So although the software's chat function remained available, people elected to be silent.

These observations suggest that when people participate in special events in VisitorsStudio, they are sensitive to the web space's social dimension. Consequently they adopt a respectful attitude to this space (comparable to behaviours in physical performance venues) by not blocking the on-screen view with their avatars, nor cluttering up the IRC channel with unrelated chatter. A sense of co-presence arises from co-inhabitation of a virtualised environment, and generates a range of affects which in turn modulate linguistic and social behaviours.

VisitorsStudio could be considered a form of what Fluxus denoted as “intermedia,” that is, “new, or combined media which emerge in the spaces and connections between existing forms” (Smith 2005: 125, 127).[277] VisitorsStudio falls conceptually amongst four distinct artforms—VJ mixing, visual poetry, MC 'toasting' from the hiphop tradition, and internet performance, expressive forms with their own histories.[278] When these forms coalesce on the VisitorsStudio platform something new occurs outside of their individual traditions. Intermedia requires receivers/audiences to actively engage to derive meaning from the unfamiliar fusion of art forms they encounter. With eight channels of information to simultaneously perceptually and cognitively process, people can derive a multiplicity of individualised meanings. VisitorsStudio is an open-ended system in which people contribute ideas, themes, and raw content. Each session reflects both the creative choices of individual participants, and the serendipitous collisions of materials and rhythms.

Furtherfield's DIWO praxis underpins FurtherStudio and VisitorsStudio. Both projects exemplify social software built in response to the desires of users. As network art systems, the projects open up ephemeral, socially-generative contexts which sprawl

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277 Unlike “mixed media” works such as opera, where the compositional elements of music, text, and set design, so on, remain separate, intermedial works such as concrete poetry “fall conceptually between visual art and literature,” and the resultant “fusion” impels audiences/receivers to engage with the work as “both visual and literary art” and the new associations and possibilities for making meaning that arise (Higgins 1984 :15-16).

278 Although VisitorsStudio has elements of some V-J visual mixing platforms, it can also manipulate audio files, host live chat, and, most importantly, is designed for creating multi-authored performances over distance. In the history of art and technology remotely-located artists have employed various technologies to make collaborative performances, from telefax to satellite video, and so in this way VisitorsStudio belongs to a specific experimental art tradition (Chandler & Neumark 2005).

between the hard space of embodied reality and the soft space of electronic communications. Traces of their collective creative production remain accessible online, as hypertextual and animated narratives, downloadable multimedia mixes, web-based reviews, and blog contributions. This is social production of the common.

Next I return to Furtherfield's evolution, examining its resonances with two earlier spatialised cultural expressions, British Punk with its DiY praxis, and the cross-artform and underground cultures which flourished in Bristol. The Furthernoise sound art project transforms DiY into DIWO, and replicates the Bristol method of melding artistic experimentation and cultural activism.

Part Three, Spatial, Cultural, and Historical Specificity

The Do it Yourself Culture of British Punk

> Don't rely on others, and don't wait for a movement, get out there and start your own!
> —John Lydon, 2002

The spirit of Furtherfield resides amongst people who connect in the disembodied goo of the network. Although Furtherfield's immaterial qualities can obscure the circumstances which brought it into being, its genesis can be traced back to specific times and places, moods and energies, affinities and frictions. Other genealogies exist in parallel with the aforementioned Backspace narrative. One trajectory links back to the influence of British Punk from its 1970s London birthplace on DiY culture. The unleashed creativity exploding across the country was a social generator propelling the formation of elastic communities and networks. Another trajectory links to Bristol, a city which nurtured cultural innovation during the post-Punk decades. Like-minded people gravitated towards each other, generating networks and communities, and distinctive works and styles. The material conditions and energetic momentum of both cities generated particular forms of biopolitical production, social organisation, and radical imaginaries during a period of major transition from deindustrialisation to postindustrialisation.

Punk appeared in London in the early 1970s, spreading virally throughout Britain and especially impacting the northern cities. England was then a "very depressing place," and "completely run down," with a collapsing economy creating rolling strikes, "massive unemployment," and a three-day working week (Gibson & Mann 2002b).[279]

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279 Quotes in the following two paragraphs by the Sex Pistols' John Lyndon (aka Johnny Rotten), musician Jah Wobble, the Slits' Viv Albertine, and entrepreneur Andrew Czezowski.

The sense of “everything going to seed” produced a “terrible lack of dynamic in society.” The ruling Labor party was ineffectual, and waiting in the wings was Tory leader and passionate champion of neoliberalism, Margaret Thatcher. For working and lower middle class young people there seemed to be “No Future.”[280] As long as they remained disaggregated and silent as a class, they were invisible and powerless. From this dispersed multitude, through serial acts of collective doing, Punk was constituted.

The “sounds of anger are not melodic,” declares ex-Sex Pistol John Lydon. Ultimately Punk was not about music, but about frustration, disgust, and disenfranchisement. When youth could not find themselves represented in the bellows of overproduced orchestral rock, they produced a culture relevant to their identity and concerns. Their sounds were not about musical virtuosity, but about what they wanted to say, to others like them, and to the class that oppressed or discounted them, reflecting what happened “every day in the street.”

Punk worked on an affective level, and combined affective and communicative labour, to produce transformed affects, a new cultural style, and a political awareness about larger dynamics of power. These angry sounds were exciting because people were “actually singing about...how pissed off we all were” (Gibson & Mann 2002c).[281] “Everything was social comment, about the country that we were living in.” Yet despite the social anger driving Punk, the scene was not violent, just “chaotically exuberant.”

Space plays a vital role in aggregating cultural, social, and political energies. For DiY culture in general, the “construction or reclamation” of space is a continual project, and anything from a “drop-in advice centre to a living space is evidence of DiY's aim to combine party and protest, to blur the distinction between action and living” (McKay 1998: 26). Every emergent cultural tendency needs a “nerve centre” to aggregate and transmit energies (Gibson & Mann 2002c). Responding to this need, entrepreneur Andrew Czezowski opened the Roxy Club in London, which became the “first, and only, punk base” (ibid.).[282]

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280 The sentiment of “No Future!” was captured in the lyrics of the Sex Pistols' *Anarchy in the UK*. A number of influential 20th century British subcultural “styles” and movements have been “created by working class people in their free time,” notes Armin Medosch (2009, no page numbers). Since the 1950s “mods and rockers, teddy boys and girls, rude boys and soul girls shook the world with new attitudes that were hedonistic *and* rebellious at the same time.” And periodically the culture industry steps in to “exploit” these new styles.

281 Quotes in this and the following paragraph are from musician Siobhan Fahey, fan/performer Helen of Troy, Czezowski, and DJ/fimmaker Don Letts.

282 The emerging young talents who debuted at the Roxy included Siouxsie and the Banshees, the Sex Pistols, The Clash, and The Dammed, all now household names in Punk history.

The "realisation of direct, unmediated political power depends on the ability of everyday culture to express, channel and evolve social needs," London-based working class artist and writer Stefan Szczelkun (1993, no page numbers) argued in his book *The Conspiracy of Good Taste*.[283] The elite classes, understanding how control can be used in the cultural arena, had systematically repressed British working class culture since the 19th century (ibid.). The denial of peoples' own culture is an "act of extreme violence however 'nicely' it is done" (ibid.). In Britain the tightly co-ordinated "forces of oppression" operated as "Good Taste," and hence any attack from below on good taste was an act of class warfare. Punk was tasteless. The proliferation of punk culture was a strident "Fuck You!" to representational politics. The aggregation of political dissatisfaction, anger, and an emerging collective identity mobilised a movement which built, albeit briefly, experiments in autonomy.

Perhaps Punk was too anarchic and disorganised to be classified as a social movement, but it was a cultural *force* that rapidly rippled outwards to "little villages and towns all over the country" (Gibson & Mann 2002d).[284] Punk's infectious "central message" was autonomy, and its DiY ethos extended "to every aspect of production."[285] Punk "revolutionised the idea that you could play gigs, make your own records, produce yourself, have your own attitude and artworks, that you could do it yourself." People wanted to get involved as "everything was Do it Yourself ethic." For example, one Sex Pistols gig would energise "fifty other bands trying to get it together" (Gibson & Mann 2002c). Punk's affects were transmitted through its media: music, clothes, design, dance styles, and publications. It established its own circuits of distribution, through independent record labels, self-organised gigs, and festivals, and fanzines documented and critiqued the scene's contents. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s this force connected with, and impacted upon, numerous groups, communities and movements.[286]

Furtherfield have repositioned Punk's DiY praxis within the domain of the network. DiY was a means to an end, the autonomous production of one's own culture outside of capital's structures of control. But there is no 'outside' and hence Punk was rapidly co-opted by capital. Do It With Others (DIWO) takes a completely different approach, fostering the production of sociality through sociality *within capital*, to challenge its

283 As this book is out of print I have used the online version (with an updated section) at <http://www.stefan-szczelkun.org.uk/taste/CGTindex.html>.

284 Quotes in this paragraph from Sigue Sigue Sputnik member Tony James, Letts, and George X.

285 It did not take long (some say only a year or so) for Punk's incredible energy and promise to be appropriated, but its DiY ethos clearly remains inspirational.

286 Despite Punk's rapid commercialisation, auto-production and distribution continued through within other scenes such as industrial music and anarcho-punk (Glasper 2006).

logic from the inside. DIWO is the mole within. The early Punks had transformed their frustrated individualised anger into productive collective momentum through experimental creative practices, and in so doing had generated an infectious social imaginary that traversed the globe. Similarly, albeit on a far smaller scale, Furtherfield have responded to prevailing social, political, and cultural conditions in which the experiences of many were either ignored or devalued, by creating their own circuits of artistic experimentation and expression. Their vision of radical plurality encompasses "anti-global, anti-corporate control" over their own "cultures and localities" (Garrett 2007). In this way people can "discover the artist in themselves, and then see themselves as contributors to a culture" (Catlow 2007). Punk laid a foundation stone for future subcultures and movements, including local expressions of a transglobal tendency that knits together media activism, social activism, and art making.

The Bristol Experience

> While the Situationists had 'détourned' images, the street cultures of the 1980s practised 'détournement technologique', the turning around of either cheap consumer-tech or redundant formerly high-tech into means of production for dissident youth cultures who were now occupying the ruins of industrial culture, literally and metaphorically.
>
> —Armin Medosch, 2009

The culture industries and the manufacturing of pleasure, along with the nation's newly virtualised financial sector, contributed to Britain's post-recession economic regeneration in the 1990s.[287] Alternative production was also flourishing, and the seaboard city of Bristol on England's west coast spawned a thriving independent cultural scene throughout the 1980s and 1990s. The city's size and ethnic mix was well-suited to coalesce creative energies in a recognisable counter-cultural force. The 'trip hop' musical genre was born in Bristol, and its fusion of Jamaican beats and 'toasting' with experimental electronica was emblematic of the innovative, eclectic forms emerging from the social margins to meld new epicentres.

Historically, Bristol had been a vital British node (along with London and Liverpool) within the "intercultural and transnational formation" which formed the "Black Atlantic" (Gilroy 1993: *ix*). Bristol was a major port, market, and financial centre in the slavery triangle which linked West Africa, Britain, and the 'New World' colonies. Today its five hundred thousand inhabitants include many post-WW2 Caribbean emigrées. Modern Bristol faced its own social problems as the reclaimed marshlands of St Pauls with its large Jamaican community became "ghettoised," propelling riots in the mid-

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287 See *Creative Industries Mapping Document* 1998; Stallabrass 2006.

1980s and retaliatory police raids (N. Jenkins 2008).

Despite (or perhaps due to) the social frictions, Bristol was a seedbed for cultural experimentation, and St Pauls' substantial Jamaican population made a significant impact on the local sound. Two clubs anchored Bristol's thriving music scene, just as London's Roxy Club had provided a centre of gravitation for Punk.[288] The so-called Bristol Sound is "one of many different voices" spanning the 'indigenous' trip hop made famous by Massive Attack and Tricky, contemporary jazz, indy music, and drum and bass (R. Mills 2008). Also important to the genesis of the Bristol Sound was the sound system, "mixing dub plates that had just been made by Bristol musicians in the tradition of the Jamaican sound systems of Kingston" (ibid.). St Pauls Carnival was "testament" to this culture with "different sound systems literally on either side of the street facing each other and all with different mixes" (ibid.). In general, the distinctive sound's philosophy was rooted in Bristol Punk and post-Punk, with many bands having "a strong DiY ethos and sense of musical independence" that still resonates (Slinger 2008). Above all, the "Jamaican population and the music that ensued from early clubs" created the city's unique cultural scene (N. Jenkins 2008).

In the protracted dreariness of early neoliberalism, a Bristol base enabled artists of all stripes to experiment within a framework of non-commodified time. As local rents were extremely low, people could survive without much money. People's various part-time jobs ranged from stained glass to landscape gardening to computer maintenance. Autonomy was still a possibility. Marc Garrett, originally an Essex lad from Southend, spent the late 1980s and early 1990s in Bristol. People who became associated with Furtherfield including Roger Mills and Neil Jenkins, and others in a now international media arts scene, were also based in Bristol at that time. Some, like artist prankster Heath Bunting, have remained. Members of this loose formation made connections to Birmingham, the South West, Wales, Liverpool, and London (Garrett 2007).

Bristol's pirate radio scene flourished in this time-rich environment, and stations included Black FM, Passion FM, and Galaxy. Roger Mills is an Australian composer, musician, and sound artist who lived in Bristol for twenty years. In the radio station originally set up by Heath Bunting and Jim Adlington, with which he, Jenkins, and Garrett became involved, something "magical" was occurring as people experimented with the limits of the medium (R. Mills 2008). Every Sunday afternoon the radio station would broadcast from a different location within a small physical network of apartments and rooftops, playing demo tapes sent in by audio artists and bands. These agile broadcasts simply "poked the aerial out for a couple of hours" to evade police

288 These were the Dug Out Club, and later the Moon Club/Lakota club (Webb, no date).

tracers. The experience of DiY radio trained people up to the extent that some went on to work in the professional sector (ibid.).

Skill sharing was integral to pirate culture. As with Punk, a lack of technical proficiency was no impediment, and in fact encouraged experimentation. Information about how to build a radio transmitter became “underground public knowledge” circulated via social networks, as people committed to “sharing their ideas and moving things along” explains Neil Jenkins (2008).

Abandoned warehouses, factories, and offices were scattered across deindustrialised Britain, and in Bristol rents for large adaptable spaces were low. Recall Hardt and Negri's (2009: 256) observation that the “organisation of encounters in the metropolis” is not only a “political matter” but also an economic one. The three storey Jamaica Street studios near St Pauls were set up in the early 1990s and accommodated artists working in ceramics, silver, comics, painting, photography, and installation. Studio residents hosted live events held over open weekends which involved “everything from performance poetry, to flamenco dancing, to bands,” and open house studios showcased current work (N. Jenkins 2008). A physical base can nurture a nascent cultural scene, and in this case the studios encouraged collaboration and cross-skilling. Here we have instances of those serendipitous metropolitan “joyful encounters” which represent the “pinnacle” of the biopolitical economy, as they provide the means to discover and produce the common (Hardt & Negri 2009: 256).

Throughout Bristol an underground momentum was gathering. Art which reflects a “passionate engagement with pop culture” might indicate “'the' central future location of resistance struggle, a meeting place where new and radical happenings can occur,” says bell hooks (1990: 31). The “common spirit” to share ideas and develop distribution platforms produced a thriving energy, and a “tradition” was evolving even if people were unaware of it at the time (Garrett 2007). These productive encounters were not represented in mainstream cultural discourse. But the art establishment still craved the new and so gallerists periodically approached artists, despite lacking knowledge of the symbolic language, intention of the works, or the culture which had produced them (Garrett 2007). However, subordinated classes are not “looking to the Other for recognition” (hooks 1990: 22). Rather, “we are recognising ourselves and willingly making contact with all who would engage us in a constructive manner” (ibid.). In Bristol local art groups decided to take control of their own culture and medium, to “represent their own process of mediation, to claim their own identities, their own group identities, and their own art, on their own terms” (Garrett 2007).

Bristol's “mini-Renaissance” generated contexts for people to recognise themselves in the “excellent” and “outrageous” work produced: music production, sound art in the

streets, performative interventions, zines, and magazines (Garrett 2007). In a subway event, for example, skateboarders would post their artworks up next to artists, someone would bring a boom box, “everyone would be dancing, and that would be their exhibition” (ibid.). The experiential, sensory, and often spontaneous form of participatory action happening in Bristol was a microcosm of larger events bringing different people together in interconnected social movements flowering across Britain in the 1990s (McKay 1998; McDonald 2006).

Art and activism elided during a period of intense political “upheaval and agitation.” Whatever creative field people were working in, everybody felt that they had a place in a lively culture of resistance. The Anti-Poll Tax “social network” facilitated by pirate radio demonstrates this:

> No Bullshit Radio...fed through into local politics like organising against the Poll Tax... It would talk about events, getting people to come along if one of the ministers was coming down, there'd be a stall. And they set up the Anti-Poll Tax office which dealt with people's claims, and also people being sent to prison for non payment. It was basically a social network in which people could get help, [and] legal help... That was directly across the road from...the stained glass studio where Heath [Bunting] and I were being trained...There'd always be to-ings and fro-ings between the art studio and the Anti-Poll Tax office (R. Mills 2008).

Eventually Marc Garrett relocated in London, and Mills and Jenkins remained. As Jenkins had been making various net art projects, Garrett invited him to be Technical Director on *Skin/Strip,* a collaboration between Completely Naked and Furtherfield. This participatory project “broke new ground for interactive arts,” challenging “social boundaries” around nudity and questioning the “political margins of copyright, ownership and censorship” (Completely Naked 2003). The connections forged between Furtherfield and Jenkins/Mills then extended into a new project, Furthernoise.

Sound and Sociality Online: Furthernoise

In 2004 Furtherfield launched **furthernoise.org** as an online platform for experimental music and sound art. The project has evolved over time to incorporate an internet radio station, downloadable releases of CDs and single tracks, VisitorsStudio integration, and the hosting of special projects.[289] Marc Garrett's interest in creating

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289 The portal is at <http://www.furthernoise.org>. See 'Furthernoise' 2010.

collaged audioscapes in the Plunderphonics tradition had been one motivation for the project.[290] Furthernoise's original incarnation hosted audio art by a small number of composers including Roger Mills. Soon dedicated labour was required to elicit critical reviews and explore other possibilities for the platform in response to a growing audience. Subsequently, Furtherfield invited Mills to curate the whole project, an approach which combines elements of hierarchical organisation (a sole curator) and network-based organisation (many contributors shaping the project's contents and processes).

After Mills (2008) restructured the website into an "annual set of reviews about new music and sound art in general" including installations and radio, it became "inundated" by submissions. Whilst submissions still mainly come from the United States, audio work and reviews also arrive from Europe. Most Furthernoise reviewers are practitioners themselves, and so bring their own experiences to the subjects of their critiques. The English language site also periodically translates material.

Roger Mills' (2008) background as a composer/musician has influenced how he conceptualises Furthernoise. It is simultaneously a "library, catalogue, and archive" but above all a "jukebox." When online visitors enter the portal the audio player automatically plays the currently featured works, then plays previous net releases from the net label. This hybrid catalogue/jukebox quality led to a collaboration with the Freesound Project, an collectively-constructed free sound library for making individual or collaborative compositional works.[291] Users type in a key word and Freesound's

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290 The sampling and remixing of music/sound is the core of "Plunderphonics," a term invented by the experimental composer John Oswald (1985). The work of sound collagists Negativland exemplifies the genre (Joyce 2005: 176-189). Plunderphonics challenges the corporate construction of audio "piracy" by arguing that all musical forms are based on borrowing and stealing, practices fundamental to innovation. The praxis challenges legal enclosures of knowledge such as the 1976 extension to the US Copyright Act to cover sound recordings; previously only written scores/lyrics were protected. "After decades of being the passive recipients of music in packages, listeners now have the means to assemble their own choices, to separate pleasures from the filler. They are...making compilations of a diversity unavailable from the music industry, with its circumscribed stables of artists, and an ever more pervasive policy of only supplying the common denominator" (Oswald 1985). Some within the Furthernoise network extend Plunderphonics by using internet audio streams as source material to be further mashed and restreamed.

291 Initiated by Universitat Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona, the Freesound Project is an extensively used academic tool and "open database of sounds for scientific research." Its "collaborative database of audio snippets, samples, recordings, bleeps" allows users to browse, upload and download sounds, and "interact with fellow sound-artists" ('The Freesound Project' 2010).

database returns examples of appropriate sounds previously uploaded by other users. Furthernoise partnered with Freesound in *Appropriate Reappropriations,* where participants from both networks collaborated on a "net release" (downloadable audio album) using material retrieved from Freesound. One track on this release is a remix of all of them. This DIWO project set up a collaboration of "constant flows," bringing together individuals from two distinct but complementary networks to glean from and enrich the common.

Furthernoise's close relationship with the VisitorsStudio project distinguishes it from comparable sound art sites. After the Jodie Rose interview, Mills envisaged other ways to use the artware, and the Furthernoise team created a series of "mini festivals." The 'Month of Sundays' (2006) program spanned four weekend Sunday afternoons in which sound and visual artists performed "audio-visual networked improvisations." Each event manifested in physical spaces in Bristol, London and New York as well via the internet, as people simultaneously played or watched via the online studio, creating a virtualised form of an art happening.[292]

Furthernoise's internet radio station provides an "off-flow for submissions" from experimental composers, sound artists, and musicians. Because more albums are submitted than can be reviewed and featured on the website, the radio can showcase individual tracks from albums. Here is another Fluxus trace: artists creating their own systems of exchange to enable peers to locate one another's work, and hence extend and fuse new conceptual horizons.

Internet radio can be a medium for exchange-based production as well as distribution. Partnering with art radio station Resonance FM,[293] Furthernoise connected three spatially-dispersed audio artists—Midori Harana in Japan, John Kannenberg in Chicago, and Mark Frankham in Oslo—to probe how VisitorsStudio could function as an

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292 The "happening" is a good example of the Fluxus notion of "intermedia." Its roots lie within the late 1950s experimental art scene, with painter Allan Kaprow meditating on "the relationship of the spectator and the work. He put mirrors into his objects so the spectator could feel included in them. That wasn't physical enough, so he made enveloping collages which surrounded the spectator. These he called 'environments'. Finally...he began to include live people as part of the collage, and this he called a 'happening'" (Dick Higgins 1984: 20).

293 Resonance104.4fm, the "world's first radio art station" was established by London Musicians' Collective and started broadcasting on 1 May 2002. It describes itself as an "archive of the new, the undiscovered, the forgotten, the impossible" and an "invisible gallery, a virtual arts centre whose location is at once local, global and timeless." See 'Resonance104.4fm: London's arts radio station' 2010.

audio studio for networked improvisation. A two week exploratory phase culminated in a radio program and real-time performance on VisitorsStudio, in which composers live mixed sound files they had created during development.

Another initiative was *Radio you can watch*, with guest VJs mixing images via VisitorsStudio to complement sound streamed via internet radio, creating a "visual podcast" (R. Mills 2008). In this instance, internet streaming was used simultaneously with conventional terrestrial community radio. Audiences "listened to the sound" on analogue radios and viewed the images online "as they were being mixed in real-time" (ibid.). The idea of visual radio had arisen out of Graziano Milano and Neil Jenkins (2008) serendipitously fiddling with VisitorsStudio during a show Mills was broadcasting from a Bristol community radio station. They discovered how to stream audio from the iPod archive of shows and coincide it with live visuals. This innovation added to the artware's functionality and broadened potential of net radio to be an expanded medium, just as previously live events and installations had birthed the 'expanded cinema' intermedium (see Footnote 314).

Traditional radio is a spatially-specific, synchronous medium, locking listeners to fixed broadcast locations and times. In contrast, internet radio is a "more mobile medium" with listeners able to stream (listen in real time) or download (save) programs from global channels onto digital devices (R. Mills 2008). Net radio 'podcasts' to listeners who must actively search out programs, individualising the medium. The sound art collective radioqualia had sensed this potential in the 1990s, and developed web-based database tools to help listeners to tune into and schedule internet radio services from around the world.[294] In this regards creative practitioners were leap years ahead of corporate broadcast and ICT companies who displayed little interest in such social and cultural uses of the emerging technologies. These practitioners formed an avant-garde who socialised technologies and created a user-base for them, fulfilling an expressed desire about how people wanted to make and access non-mainstream cultural content.

Regardless of the asynchronous aspect of internet radio podcasts, individual programs do possess a time and date specificity which can alter the affective dimension of the listening experience. On community radio especially people want to feel that they are "sharing in that period of time with the radio station or the radio program they're listening to," and if the producer is "disenfranchising that from the program,

294 radioqualia was formed by Adam Hyde and Honor Harger (2010) in 1998 to explore "how broadcasting technologies can be used to create new artistic forms, and how sound art can be used to illuminate abstract ideas." The group developed tools such as the Frequency Clock to facilitate "artistic streaming media projects." See also Bosma (2011: 214-216).

then it might be a little too clinical" (R. Mills 2008). By comparing download statistics of audience numbers of live net radio programs with those of archived net programs, it is evident that the most active periods might not occur during the initial transmission (N. Jenkins 2008). This suggests that the collective affective experience of internet radio might be substantially different from that of real time radio, and provides another a clue to the fluid nature of network culture.

Furtherfield's flavour of network praxis has been influenced by ideas and practices from distinct historical British movements and scenes which shared common goals about autonomous cultural production. The drive is not only to make network art but also to support people who want to create their own structures across networks. Furthernoise progressed the medium of internet radio into a new intermedium of visual radio by incorporating VisitorsStudio into broadcasts. Such innovations are less likely to occur in the tightly controlled domains of commodified networks, where creativity faces rules and restrictions at every step.

In the final part of this chapter we examine Furtherfield's liberatory ideals, and how its tools and contexts for participatory culture might produce small scale social transformation. Doing It With Others is a way of connecting geographically-dispersed but philosophically-adjacent clusters of cooperative creative activity. As individuals experiment with the productive potential of network-based creativity, the social begins to shift subtly. Those art forms that exist outside of markets push at the edges of the known, and suggest new ways of interpreting and being in the world together.

Part Four, Liberation

Being Together Sometimes: Networks of Neighbourhoods

> We are flies caught in a spider's web. We start from a tangled mess, because there is no other place to start....We can only try to emancipate ourselves, to move outwards, negatively, critically, from where we are...
>
> —John Holloway, 2005

Postindustrial society "invents technologies" which enable symbolic goods, languages, and information to be produced, with the result that our bodies, sexualities, and mental lives are transformed in ways peculiar to our era (Touraine 2008: 214). We could say that postindustrialism produces *us,* totally, in a way that industrialism never could. Consequently, the plane of liberation in general, including the "field of social movements," now encompasses "all aspects of social and cultural life" (ibid.). And just

as the "political capacity" of the 19th century labouring classes took some time to become apparent, we are only now at an "analogous stage of evolution of the new social movements" (ibid. 217).

In his analysis of contemporary forms of, and interconnections amongst, social movements, sociologist Kevin McDonald (2006: *vi*) argues that not only "relationships between individual and collective, or shift from hierarchies and networks" are at stake, but also "ways of being in the world" and how we experience our "embodied subjectivity." Hence people are constructing new "grammars of experience" (ibid.). If we combine Touraine's expansive notion of social movements with McDonald's conceptualisation of global movements, Furtherfield fits within the transversal field constituted by the "emergence of new kinds of networks and flows of communication, action, and experience" (ibid. 3). It is one more project peachily fuzzing the once relatively delineated boundaries between art and activism.

Today it is not only our intellects which need to be engaged but our senses also, and that nebulous realm of affect. The communications and actions vivifying global movements are "more embodied and sensual than deliberative and representational," says McDonald (ibid. 5). Consequently, we must recognise that action entails previously overlooked dimensions such as "touch, hearing, moving, feeling, tasting, memory, and breathing" (ibid.). Emergent practices point to "forms of public experience that do not correspond to understandings of deliberative, rational, disembodied public spheres" (ibid.). Paradoxically, the more we dematerialise ourselves through the structured informationalisation of everything, the more many of us crave rematerialisation via the wildly disorderly sensual.

To add to the chaos the heterogeneous makeup of groups experimenting with new socio-political forms reveals the limits of "'identity' paradigms" which emphasise coherent "communities, norms, and group cultures" (ibid.). Complex social life does not fit into rational schematics and mechanical metaphors as it is fluid and bumpy. Change is more likely to be non-linear than strictly causal, and shaped by "'tipping points'" and unpredictable events precipitating dramatic" shifts and "new patterns" (ibid. 9).[295] If much of life is now beyond control, how can we effect social change? Can "tipping points" be coaxed into being?

A central trope for John Holloway (2005) is the scream. This is the scream of refusal which expresses the horrors of our times, a gut reaction which propels collective experimentation with new forms of social relations outside of capitalism. It is the scream of *Ya Basta!* (Enough is Enough!) which gathers together those who reject both

295 Here McDonald acknowledges sociologist John Urry's interpretations of complexity theory.

the Left's traditional ideological divides and liberalism's representative politics. From this scream evolves an "antagonistic 'we' grown from an antagonistic society" (ibid. 4). If enough people give voice to the scream in passionate polyglottic discordance, tipping points could be sung into existence.

A sense of the scream reverberates throughout Furtherfield. It is a chorus performed by those in the network repelled by the hyper-commodified circuits of production and distribution. They refuse Brit Art's legacy of cynicism and manufactured marginality within a hermetic art world, along with the self-exploiting narcissism hook dangled by Web 2.0 giants. Instead, they are attracted by open-ended systems which use art to bring together the "embodied intersubjectivities" characterising the "new patterns of social life associated with networks and flows" (McDonald op. cit. *vi*, 9). Their scream attracts a "neighbourhood" of others similarly experimenting with new forms of social organisation and cultural production. The *Rethinking Wargames* and *DissensionConvention* projects offer some clues to Furtherfield's liberatory potential, as will be discussed shortly.

The Furtherfield "neighbourhood" is a social zone comprised of "sister-sites" and projects.[296] Conceptually, this "self-growing system" resembles a "little village...where people go and hunt and bring back food" (Garrett 2007). Some in the neighbourhood return from long journeys with stories about things far away, further enriching and feeding those around them. The notion of belonging to a neighbourhood conjures up a "cluster of homes, services, playgrounds, learning places, infrastructure...all developing alongside each other," populated by "variously dysfunctional and talented individuals" (Catlow 2007).

The idea of "cyber-domesticity" complements that of neighbourhood, building upon Jess Loseby's concept of the integration of domestic life and digital art production (Garret 2007). Neighbourhood counters the stifling sameness of arts professionalism by bringing a "bit of gunk back into it all that makes people conscious that they're part of something that's almost urban" (ibid.). This rendering of loose togetherness invites people to reflect on how they might belong to one or more of the many communities within a neighbourhood, engaging with a "small, scale-free network" (ibid.). Electronic neighbourhoods contain "individuals, pairings, groups" who "intersect and interact in different ways" (Catlow 2007). This "very complex, constantly changing recipe"

296 Catlow and Garrett prefer speaking of neighbourhoods rather than communities, feeling that the term community has been instrumentalised to leverage moral or political advantage. To illuminate the "lateralness and the connectedness of...activities in the Furtherfield Neighbourhood," they made an "origami-style map" based on the salt and pepper shaker game (see images at Catlow & Garrett 2007: 24, 27).

involves people “connecting or interacting, whether it's to borrow a cup of sugar, or because they need to borrow a tool or because they are picking kids up” (ibid.). Furtherfield recognises people's “interdependence” without “centrally over-determining” it (ibid.). For Catlow, “the most you can say is that 'we are together sometimes.'”

The notion of being together sometimes invites teasing out. Pulling the thread in one direction leads to the Temporary Autonomous Zone or TAZ concept. The massive global protests on the weekend of 15/16 February 2003 against the Coalition of the Willing's impending war against Iraq could be considered an exceptional example of a geospatially-dispersed TAZ. Although this was not the first global day of protest, participation levels were unprecedented, with millions on the world's streets.[297]

Pulling the thread in another direction leads to my concept of a 'SPAZ' or 'Semi-Permanent Autonomous Zone'. Whereas the “free enclaves” of a TAZ by definition have a limited duration, a SPAZ exists in an extended spatial and/or temporal dimension of a cultural landscape. Bristol's regular Sunday afternoon pirate radio broadcasts described earlier provide an example. A pirate radio station needs regular time slots, whereas it does not need the same physical space from which to transmit. It requires time to gather momentum, to attract content and an audience. Listeners tuning in to the periodic broadcasts can experience that sense of “we are together sometimes” by imagining others who form the network of listeners and contributors.

A third variation of “being together” occurs when telepresence enables social interconnections. “Electronic civil disobedience” is a politicised form of telepresence which manifests around contentious issues.[298] When a mass of people log on to a website to perform the “networked version of a peaceful sit-in,”[299] they create an

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297 A chronicle of popular protests is contained in Yuen, Burton-Rose, & Katsiaficas (2004). Katsiaficas (ibid. 5) stresses that the “antiglobalisation protests” began prior to Seattle in 1999, manifesting in many countries. Despite the 2003 anti-war protests not having a specifically antiglobalisation agenda, many participants connected the impending military invasion with corporate/State geopolitical and economic interests. Being one of an estimated one hundred thousand in Adelaide, I experienced a palpable, energising sense of belonging to a transglobal body who came together at the same time against the war.

298 Critical Art Ensemble (1994) encapsulated the concept of ECD in their book *The Electronic Disturbance*, and expanded their ideas in their 2001 book *Digital Resistance: Explorations in Tactical Media.*

299 The first internet protest was realised by the group Strano Network in December 1995 (Netstrike Working Group 2001; Deseriis 2003: 157). Their “Netstrike” bombarded the French government's website to protest nuclear testing.

"electronic disturbance" in the bunkers of info-power (Dominguez 2003). FloodNet, a software tool automating website occupation developed by artist group Electronic Disturbance Theatre (EDT) in 1997, is a well-documented example (Deseriis 2003: 153-163).[300] EDT described FloodNet as a "collective weapon of presence" which could invert the "logic of wide open propaganda pipes by flooding network connections with millions of hits from widely distributed, fully participatory nodes" (Stalbaum, n. d.). FloodNet enabled a "performance of presence" which told its targets "We are numerous, alert, and watching carefully" (ibid.). Unsurprisingly, the United States Department of Defense (DOD) was more than interested, launching a hostile Java Applet in retaliation during one of the first 'netstrikes' held in solidarity with the Zapatistas (Deseriis 2003: 161-163). This applet crashed the computers of people participating in the Floodnet action.[301]

From global days of action, to pirate radio broadcasts, to Floodnets, these distinctly different forms of participatory collective action engage participants' imaginations by providing the experience of being *somewhere* with others, making something *together,* whether by embodied or disembodied modes of being. It is perhaps more powerful to be together "sometimes" rather than always, as this implies continual dynamic processes of class/group recomposition and decomposition within the organisational form of the loose network.

The Furtherfield neighbourhood has electronic nodes hyperlinked from the home page—Furthernoise, Visitors Studio, Furtherfield blog, and projects such as Rosalind and Net Behaviour. Physical nodes include the HTTP gallery, and temporary projects locations. Each node offers a productive environment, and nodes connect and crossover. The various online and offline precincts "reverberate" and expand outwards, forming "different shapes through their activities that influence the internet as well as everyday life" (Garrett 2007). Furtherfield introduces "different forms of creativity

300 In an interview with writer/performance artist Coco Fusco, EDT member Ricardo Dominguez (2003: 98-106) describes Floodnet in detail, linking its genealogy to both the "Digital Zapatismo" practised by the Zapatista National Liberation Army and also the tradition of "invisible theatre" performed by Augusto Boal.

301 Coincidentally I was apartment and cat-sitting in New York for Ricardo Dominguez and Diane Ludin while EDT were launching Floodnet at Ars Electronica. This was a dramatic period for EDT as Dominguez received threats that he would be killed if he was to proceed the project. As I kept trying to log in to join the Floodnet at the appointed time, the computer kept crashing. Only afterwards did I find out that I was one of the many civilians whose machine had been attacked by the DOD's hostile applet. Subsequently, the cyber attack received mainstream media and legal attention as it was reportedly the first instance of a US militarised cyber attack on ordinary citizens.

from different nodes," encouraging the "different types of creative minds" to have a look at what others are doing (ibid.). Their processes of cross-pollination mirror the evolutionary dynamics of contemporary social movements.

Today's global social movements have evolved through processes of informal exchange and influence, explains Kevin McDonald (2006: 53-69). The affinity group has played a core structural role in key campaigns, beginning with the 1975-77 Clamshell Alliance occupation of a proposed nuclear reactor site in New Hampshire. McDonald's chronology demonstrates how one "neighbourhood" can affect others through processes of exchange of information, social visions, cooperative methods, and sensory experiences.[302]

For example, the celebratory anti-roads occupation of the M41 freeway in 1996 attended by thousands had displayed a new, distinctive "grammar of action," argues McDonald (ibid. 63; see also Notes from Nowhere 2003: 51-59). The "street party" replaced demonstrations, and experiences of "embodied intersubjectivity...such as dance or hearing together" opposed "functional imperatives" (McDonald 2006: 64). An "ethic of the present" evolves from accreted experiences, "committed to living differently now, as opposed to programmatic or linear attempts to shape the future" (ibid.). "Abstracted functional space" is transformed into a "space of embodied communication" which globalises along "networks of information and emotion" (ibid.).

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302 The Clamshell Alliance aimed to stop the nuclear power plant's construction, but the extended occupation by affinity groups clusters also "promised community," a vision which inspired a "'subculture' of direct action" (McDonald 2006: 64 47). A few years later a different form of direct action by American radical environmentalists birthed the Earth First! Movement, and as their printed materials circulated internationally they inspired yet another form of direct action in the United Kingdom. This ignited a heterogeneous environmental movement which linked the concerns of New Age travellers, ecological activists, and anti-roads campaigners in collective mass actions embodying the symbolic, sensual, experiential, creative and ritual (ibid. 48-65). Britain's 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act which criminalised certain gatherings fuelled retaliatory participatory actions of a carnivalesque nature including free raves and reclaiming the streets. Section 63 of this Act made it a criminal offence for two or more people to make "preparations for the holding there [on land in the open air] of a gathering" in which music including "sounds wholly or predominantly characterised by the emission of a succession of repetitive beats" would be played ('Criminal Justice and Public Order Act' 1994). The affective dimensions of simultaneous embodied collective engagement intensified and inspired others outside of the UK, and beyond this specific issue. Increasingly people organised over the internet. Global days of action became possible, kicking off with a "Global Street Party" on 16 May 1998 celebrated in 24 cities over four continents (McDonald 2006: 64).

Many new social movements were initiated by a few people mobilising around specific issues and experimenting with alternative forms of social organisation. Similarly, socially-engaged cultural projects started by small groups who attract and interlink with others are following similar evolutionary pathways. Furtherfield's little village is constituted by the comings and goings of travellers who “mutate” Furtherfield and whole projects “continuously” (Garrett 2007). The system is “self-growing,” as were the previously mentioned social movements (ibid.). Rather than operating as a “singular group” locked into rigidly defined projects, themes must be “re-evaluated and challenged,” requiring “constant negotiation” amongst participants (ibid.).

Whereas traditional politics and counter-movements are based on representation of constituency interests delivered via institutionalised hierarchical structures, emergent social paradigms are marked by self-representation in chaotic, heterogeneous, horizontally-organised, and often embodied forms. These social constellations might be ephemeral and nomadic, neighbourhoods ebbing and flowing around specific social campaigns or cultural projects, but in another sense they are enduring producers of affects, cognitive shifts, and experiences. Neighbourhoods ground energies within loose/informal networks, offering a locus for transformation in a vast unruly plane of risk and experimentation.

Media Democratisation and the Art of Composting

> We've always felt like gardeners.
>
> — Ruth Catlow, 2007

Reclaiming the media is a crucial issue for Furtherfield. In this “dystopian age” people seek “dignity, respect, and connections” with others who yearn to play a deeper role in society (Garrett 2007). Here technology can be a “glue” to bind people's causes, and consequently bring visibility to that which has been ignored or misrepresented by direct and mediated power (ibid.). People need to take control of communication tools and media platforms for self-empowerment, and Furtherfield's contribution is to construct democratic digital media systems in which people can “claim technology” and adapt it to suit their own circumstances (ibid.). The choice of technology (as well as the technology itself) can coalesce complementary social visions and ethical positions. When people learn a technology “for a cause,” peer learning occurs (ibid.).[303]

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303 An example is Access Space, the UK's first free media lab. It is an “open-access learning community” where participants transition from “e-consumers” to “digital producers” ('Access Space Overview'). They counter planned obsolescence of ICTs is countered by rebuilding recycled computers, which then run free software. Yet this project is constituted

In contrast, Web 2.0 phenomena (exemplified by social networking sites) create individualised contexts whereby people claim a technology to "put their own ego online" rather than connecting "any kind of worthwhile set of values" which they could share (ibid.).

The interdisciplinary field of complexity theory has inspired Catlow (2007), who transposes its propositions to art practice. By supporting "complexity, chaos, and confusion" for as long as possible things which are "rich and real" can be produced. Furtherfield develops processes and socialises technologies which keep people on the "playing field," to sustain a "shared attention to things." They seek to not overly simplify things (subjects, themes, behaviours), nor to prematurely excise things which do not fit into pre-ordained shapes (ibid.).

Media democratisation is about "making good compost," that is, "creating ...fertile ground to allow a whole range of things that we don't know, and can't predict, to grow," says Catlow (ibid.). Hence Furtherfield seem themselves as gardeners rather than "grand architects building the next ZKM."[304] They strive to keep the cultures of whomever they collaborate with "open and available to newbies" (ibid.). As seeds of ideas evolve and gather substance, Furtherfield connect them to complementary projects and networks. Whereas Furtherfield embrace risk, art galleries and institutions typically shy away from it (despite their rhetoric suggesting otherwise), promoting finished projects or cultural tendencies already stamped with approval (the co-optation of tactical media at a certain point by galleries and well-funded cultural institutes and festivals comes to mind). When organic gardeners dedicate time to preparing rich compost and friable soil, they ensure that their garden (an emergent complex system) will be optimally productive. This productivity relates not only to the plant forms, also to the insects and other animals, micro-climates, and processes of decomposition and recomposition which the garden engenders.[305]

If we "ask for a theory of anti-power, says Holloway (2005: 22), we are trying "to see the invisible, to hear the inaudible." Art provides pathways into the invisible. Furtherfield's vision of social transformation is progressed through their activities:

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not by technology per se, but by the "collective intelligence of a skill-sharing community" whereby people are "mobilised" to create an "effective" learning resource (ibid.).

304 ZKM (Centre for Media and Art Karlsruhe) is an extremely well-funded international art and technology centre in Germany, and the antithesis of autonomous cultural production.

305 The subject of "media ecologies" and the interconnections and interdependencies has been explored by Matthew Fuller (2005: 2), who chooses the term "ecology" because it expresses the "massive and dynamic interrelation of processes and objects, beings and things, patterns and matter."

nurturing network neighbourhoods, building democratic media platforms, developing ways to sharpen critical attentions, preparing techno-social compost, and setting up contexts for playful exploration of serious issues. They recall Holloway's (ibid. 24) “focus on doing” which involves firstly perceiving the world as “struggle” and then using this awareness to take action.

Rethinking Wargames: Radicalised Pawns Playing for Peace

Rethinking Wargames is a continuing “participatory net art project” which has deconstructed and reconfigured the rules of chess to find “strategies that challenge existing power structures and their concomitant war machineries” (Catlow 2003).The game symbolically harnesses the power of the multitude, calling upon “pawns to join forces to defend world peace” (ibid.). The idea came to Ruth Catlow around the time of the 2003 United States-led invasion of Iraq, and was inspired by both popular culture and popular protest: a *Dr Who* storyline in which English and German soldiers banded together to fight a menancing fish monster, and the coordinated wave of global antiwar street protests. In London in February 2003 Catlow (2007) had joined with a million protesters in an “extraordinary march.” Their collective “disagreement” with an unrepresentative government overrode “social and racial divides,” reflected in banners declaring “'No to the Bosses War', 'Individuals against War in Iraq', 'The Little People say NO to War', and 'Listen to the People'” (ibid.).

The passage leading from a concept existing in one person's imagination to an online multi-player gaming experience reveals how collective intelligence and cooperative labour can be performed over networks. Catlow (ibid.) posted an image of pawns united on a reconfigured chessboard to global chess forums and net art lists, with the question “Under what conditions could the pawns in this game win?” On one level her query functioned as conceptual art, and many people constructed solutions to the problem posed, sending back possible rule changes to the game. These contributions evolved the game design from a competitive two-player game with the higher pieces opposing the pawns, to a multi-player game rewarding cooperation.

The final outcome was a three-player chess game, in which the third player plays all the pawns, while the two teams of power pieces play a traditional game to capture the king (see Figure 11 on page 234). By blocking both sides the pawns keep everyone on the board.[306]

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306 A real world analogy is the 2010 Australian federal election outcome, with a handful of non-aligned independent Members of Parliament attempting to keep the two major parties 'on the board' through radical cooperation within a minority government scenario.

Figure 11, Rethinking Wargames Entrance Portal

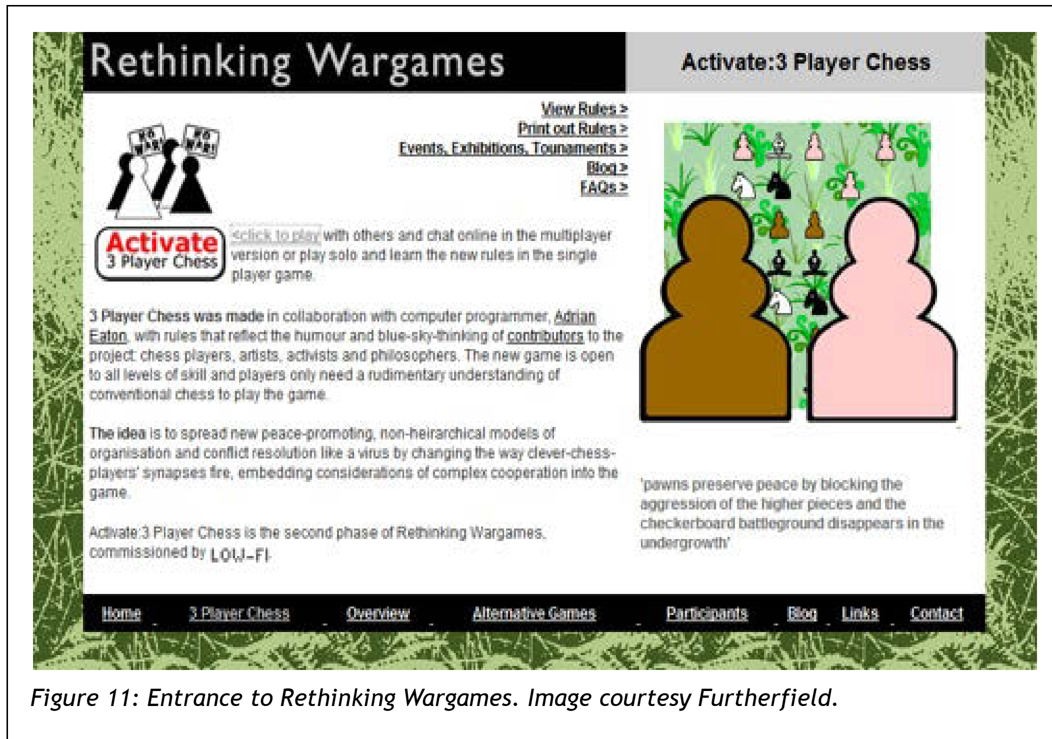

Figure 11: Entrance to Rethinking Wargames. Image courtesy Furtherfield.

The pawns symbolised the antiwar protests' “little people,” and they defended world peace by preventing any one piece from being taken for five consecutive moves, maintaining a state of détente. They needed to do this four times, with four pieces, compelling players to “preserve peace” for prolonged periods (ibid.). A contributor to the game's development suggested that after five consecutive non-killing moves grass could start growing over the board until the chequerboard pattern disappeared. Here was a green, borderless, and anational world, created by a multitude of pawns. A programmer translated the ideas into code, and many matches have been played subsequently. *Rethinking Wargames* remains a frequently viewed project; a single player version allows an individual to play by themselves, and multi-player tournaments are occasionally staged.

Rethinking Wargames is a form of generative art; in each game a unique sequence of game play is produced. Catlow had been influenced by complexity theory, that is, the study of complex adaptive systems—open evolutionary systems comprised of interrelated, self-organising and dynamic components. She drew inspiration from Robert Axelrod, who had developed a mathematical formula for supporting co-operation. Axelrod's model rules were “always be nice, always punish proportionately,” which implies a “necessary level of understanding and communication, and...a prolonged relationship” (Catlow 2007). Elements of this model were transposed to *Rethinking Wargames* as the game required players to stay on the board together and promote moves which encouraged ecologies and complexity to develop.

This ludic re-imagining of a world traditionally constituted by conflict and conquest recalls Holloway's (2005: 20) argument that the traditional concept of revolution is problematic because it aims too low, replacing one form of power with another. Revolution should rather be imagined as the “dissolution of power” (ibid.). A key to social transformation is the recuperation of *power-to*, or potency in doing, a position that Holloway shares with post-Marxists such as Touraine and Melucci (McDonald 2006). The struggle to “liberate power-to” does not aim to then construct a “counter-power” but rather to evolve “something much more radical,” an “anti-power...the dissolution of power-over, the emancipation of power-to” (Holloway 2005: 36-37). The computer-generated grass growing over the demarcated territories on *Rethinking Wargames'* chessboard symbolically responds to this revolutionary challenge, evoking new life within a complex adaptive system and a world being changed without taking power.

DissensionConvention, Network Jamming against War

> The new geography is a virtual geography, and the core of political and cultural resistance must assert itself in this electronic space.
>
> —Critical Art Ensemble, 1994

Global opposition to the Iraq war grew as civilian casualties and injuries mounted.[307] With vital infrastructure destroyed through 'Shock and Awe' tactics, cultural antiquities looted, and historical enmities inflamed, Iraq was a material testing ground for radical conservatives' notion of 'Perma-war'.[308] During this period activists, public intellectuals, writers and artists, and countless others came together to oppose the war.[309] Over time, related issues have come to light: the incarceration of 'illegal non-combatants' in the US military prison at Guantanamo, the torture of prisoners in Abu Graib, the 'rendition' of captives for interrogation in countries disregarding human rights, and the hidden undercurrents of wars in Afghanistan and Iraq as exposed by WikiLeak's release of vast tranches of classified documents.[310] ICTs highlight the interconnectedness of struggles, as intimate mobile phone or digicam recordings of prisoner torture, or the eerie 'bombcam' vision of civilians being liquidated are catapulted into the public sphere with a handful of keyboard commands.

The affective impact of such material has helped to shift public opinion and

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307 Iraq Body Count, the "world's largest public database of violent civilian deaths during and since the 2003 invasion," is a knowledge commons built by activists to counter government denial and secrecy, and to mobilise action ('Iraq Body Count', n. d.).

308 A powerful American elite have advanced the idea of that a state of globalised permanent warfare is inevitable. See 'Project for the New American Century' 2010.

309 One net art example highlighted by Neil Jenkins was Andy Forbes' 2002 webring project *Wartime* which interlinked reflections on war by 150 digital and network artists.

310 On 25 July 2010 WikiLeaks (2010a) released the *Afghan War Diary*, a document set of around 91,000 reports covering the war in Afghanistan from 2004 to 2010. This was followed on 22 October 2010 by their release of *The Iraq War Logs*, described as the "largest classified military leak in history," comprising 391,832 reports by United States Army soldiers documenting the second Iraq war and occupation (WikiLeaks 2010b). Regardless of controversies about how WikiLeaks operates (Lovink & Riemens 2010; Birmingham 2010: 20-27), it is a premier example of network-based biopolitical labour (See Stalder 2010a, 2010b). Whether the act of liberating information that 'just wants to be free' actually produces critical awareness or mobilises social action however is in doubt. Perhaps WikiLeaks is even a counter-Freirean system, as it dumps massive payloads of information onto the commons with no attempt at framing or activating it, acting as a species of pushy 'pull media'.

mobilise action in relation to these wars and their fallout. Barely-coordinated mediated actions can bring multitudes into being. Within the multitude's mass of singularities, embodied individual actions create a productive, horizontally-organised sphere of social relations which might not agree on methods but will concur on ultimate aims of collective action.[311] Creative labour helps constitute the multitude and express its visions of alternative modes of existence.

Artware such as VisitorsStudio which enables “informal, impromptu and ad hoc collaborations” for social as well as artistic experimentation could be considered as a micro-generator of multitude (Catlow & Garrett 2007: 26). VisitorsStudio extends dialogue “beyond text” into a multi-sensory intermedium in which people co-produce temporary communicative environments (ibid.). Importantly, the platform has been used as a prism to focus attention on pressing social issues. By situating VisitorsStudio events in public places, the platform connects spatially-dispersed groups sharing common concerns.

An example is *DissensionConvention*, described as a “Transatlantic Collaborative Multimedia Protest Jam.”[312] In the autumn of 2004 the Republican National Convention (RNC) was to be held in New York. As public anger grew over the RNC and government's military policies, Postmasters Gallery mounted the *RNC NODE* exhibition, timed to coincide with the convention.[313] The *DissensionConvention* project, co-organised by Furtherfield and Postmasters as part of *RNC NODE,* used VisitorsStudio to “broadcast a new collaborative art-polemic” focussing on “how Bush and the US Republicans negatively influence every locality around the world” (Furtherfield 2004b). Between 28

311 For instance, the first period of anti-war cultural activism had a bumpy relationship with elements of the global justice movement, especially around the tensions between carnivalesque (or “less structured theatre of protest”) and sectarian approaches to protest (Shepard 2003).

312 The event is summarised on the *DissensionConvention* portal, which links to an edited archive of the 30 hours of performance (Furtherfield 2004b). The performances' mash ups of televised news footage, politicians' words, satirical animations, and ticker tapes of body counts remain potent, not least because in 2010 the Iraq occupation continues despite rhetoric about an impending 'transition' (withdrawal).

313 Work by artists such as Wolfgang Staele's (2010) The Thing (simultaneously a social sculpture, ISP, artist-run space, publisher, digital community, and more) and groups like CU-SeeMe performers Fakeshop in New York (Bosma 2011: 88-89) had paved the way for both local commercial galleries and influential institutions such as the Guggenheim to commission and exhibit digital and network-based art works. The independent gallery Postmasters was an early leader (Sawon & Banovich 2010). Shows I saw there in the mid-1990s ranged from ironic paintings of computer logos to multimedia installations with live internet feeds.

August to 2 September 2004 around twenty invited artists performed three-hour mixes which were projected at the gallery. Postmasters was a physical node of an “ad hoc, public broadcasting system of online, real time protest performances and alternative news actions,” and online streams were spatialised in New York through video projections in local bars and windows (N. Jenkins 2008). People could also watch the work online, and “chat and heckle” (ibid.). Although only the invited artists could access the mixing software during scheduled performances, at all other times online guests could mix others' files and share their own content for future performances. The project is a form of 'expanded net art' in the tradition of 'expanded cinema'.[314]

The participating artists, street poets, writers, and net poets needed to “sustain...energy and dynamics” for long jams, and each group approached the task differently, with distinctive individual modes of expression hybridising within the collaborative environment (ibid.). For example, Rogers Mills deconstructed music into constituent parts, uploading the parts to VisitorsStudio, and replaying them as loops. Mills and Jenkins' *DissensionConvention* mix built upon this technique using pre-prepared audio and images they had anticipated would combine well in an improvisational context. A unified thematic starting point determines content pre-selection and consequently performances appear choreographed.

DissensionConvention generated a multi-sensory, experiential, affective, individualised dimension of engagement. Catlow (2004) described “two cracking, energetic collaborative mixes” in her posting to the Rhizome list below. These performances were concurrent with the “march of 250,000+ protesters against Bush and the Republicans on the streets of New York,” a contemporaneousness which heightened the online experience.

> The first performance by Patrick, Maya & Marc took a psychological approach; it was dark, rich and gutsy with great sounds. Moport.org & Glowlab were right in the thick of things in New York, receiving moment by moment, worrying updates of violent arrests. They jammed with images of the street protests and texts from the multitude sent in through the Moport facility. This was totally different style and content; grass-roots, journalistic, observant and serious... Tonight promises to be a corker too... Not to be missed!

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314 This concept expounded in 1970 by Gene Youngblood (1970: 41) in his seminal book *Expanded Cinema* likened the “intermedia network of cinema and television” to humanity's “nervous system,” suggesting that inventive exploration of this intermedium could generate “expanded consciousness.”

Catlow signed off this post with the website address and the words “See you there.” The website became the neighbourhood, locus of action and interaction, as important as the physical nodes of the participating gallery, bars, and shop fronts. “See you there” was an open invitation for people to hit the website at a scheduled time. The artware enabled the affective production of co-presence, as people could sense one another's presence immediately, through the web avatars and chat functions, as well as through the mixes.

DissensionConvention exemplifies how network art can engage participants intellectually and affectively. Participants used the online platform to recombine ideas and materials which were united by a common theme and intention. Through their biopolitical labour they created an environment in which to collectively express their opposition to the political system which had initiated an illegal war. Symbolically, the series of performances created an “electronic disturbance” in the bunkers of power. Although not all participants were physically together the New York streets, they gathered online at a single website address, and their collective telepresence was reflected outwards in material space via site-specific projections.

The project's starting point emanated “from negation, from dissonance,” the continuing war causing “a scream of sadness, a scream of horror, a scream of anger, a scream of refusal,” that people wanted to express with others (Holloway 2005: 1, 6). In this instance, art gave voice to the “two-dimensional” scream.

> ...the scream of rage that arises from present experience carries within itself a hope, a projection of possible otherness. The scream is ecstatic, in the literal sense of standing out ahead of itself towards an open future. We who scream exist ecstatically. We stand out beyond ourselves, we exist in two dimensions (Holloway 2005: 6).

Summary and Observations

Critical ideas and socially-engaged practices have been orphaned in many localised instantiations of the market-driven, internationalised contemporary art world. In the place of that art which expressed the horror and contradictions of existence (Picasso's *Guernica,* or Pasolini's *Salò* for instance), was art which turned inwards on itself, or skimmed off society's salacious contents to produce serial saleable shocks of the not exactly new. Inspired by earlier art and cultural movements, Furtherfield's protagonists sought to reclaim art from capital's maw. If art had become a microcosm of capitalism, valorising competition and economic profit, then its deterroritialisation, albeit on an

experimental scale, likewise could be a microcosm of alternative social relations.

Ruth Catlow and Marc Garrett's accrued life experiences and more recent deliberations influenced the art project they decided to build. Firstly, they recognised that culture is socially produced; secondly, they suspected that the network could be an important form of social organisation in which new forms of behaviour evolve; and thirdly, they recognised that the internet as an art medium in itself had not been deeply explored. To return the art experience to the realm of the common they joined with others to develop innovative social software for artistic experimentation via the ultimate "network for interactions," the internet.

Digital and network technologies form Furtherfield's nervous system, transmitting content generated by shifting constellations of makers. This content belongs to a becoming-common, continuously produced through cooperative processes. Finding existing proprietary technologies inadequate, Furtherfield often built their own, sourcing ingenuity, enthusiasm, and (often) free labour from their international networks of similarly-spirited creators. Their artware was social software: conceived by artists, coded by artist-programmers and hacktivists, and socialised by technologically-curious creative users. This socialisation of technology is an iterative process, as users communicate desires for modifications, coders code, and all evaluate the outcomes.

Loose social bonds connecting participants resembled those found within urban neighbourhoods. The metropolis is the archetypal site of biopolitical production, Hardt and Negri (2009) claim. Furtherfield with its conglomerates of neighbourhoods, semi-transient populations, demographic diversity, and lucky encounters embodies some of this metropolitan energy. This social experiment tests network behaviour and creativity. This living laboratory spans temporal and geographical zones to create a meshwork of self-reflexive participation in the collective production of socially-engaged culture.

Play and playfulness are central priorities for Furtherfield, and reveal much about the project's emancipatory potential. Through setting up situations in which people could play with each other, the group both socialised the technologies and platforms they were developing and inhabiting, and explored the potential of cooperative behaviour to support and extend consciousness and creativity. This emphasis on play was a deliberately radical political position, continuing traditions played out in other times and other places, where the embrace of play and the refusal of work equate to a rejection of capitalism's capture of time, space, and life force. In the age of info-capitalism, post-Autonomists observe that biopolitical production extends into the whole of life, so that one is always on call, and at work, with every personal experience and affect potentially available to be commodified, monetised. Play rejects the instrumentalisation of thoughts, emotions and life, and nurtures creativity for its

own sake. Furtherfield's experiments deploy info-capitalism's tools to reject info-capitalism's bulimic engulfment of every aspect of being human.

Play has produced various forms of network art which resemble emergent systems. Chaos and unpredictability evolve into patterns and mutating iterations before dispersing again, in cycles of composition, decomposition, and recomposition. Improvisation, chance, and serendipity generate new dynamics, associations, affects, and materials. Network behaviour and the mores of cooperation grew up organically, through online and offline discursive processes. The digital sphere enabled synchronous and asynchronous modes of communication, from Internet Relay Chat, list-servs, blogs, and accessible database archives. The heterogeneous milieus reflected the participants' diversity, and ephemeral social groupings formed around projects.

The digital and the network are mechanisms to create the social, and the common. In turn, the social and the common change the shape of the digital and the network. If informational capitalism now takes the form of the network, then those tendencies and activities which socialise and commonise the network—such as play—challenge the logic of capitalism which seeks to privatise virtually all forms of the social and the common. Yet capitalism depends on innovation and freedom to expand itself, and so it becomes caught in a bare trap of its own making. Meanwhile, the will to make common does not retreat, but gains strength, impacting on capitalism itself from within its enabling techno-social assemblages.

In the 20th century political art was a special category of art, an activity which dealt with social themes and represented the myriad manifestations of top-down power while remaining firmly in the realm of art rather than in the realm of the social more broadly. In the 21st century the political is taking new forms as power and anti-power become dispersed over human and technological networks. As capital expropriates the processes and contents of cultural production, art must assert and reappropriate the common. Politicised cultural production signifies bottom-up processes which challenge the logic of power through manifesting their radically different internal processes of organisation and external systems of exchange.

As Furtherfield's praxis demonstrates, the playful can be political, not least because it nurtures the production of new, networked-based forms of being and doing together. Touraine (2008: 215) states that the new social movements are opening our collective consciousness to the reality that “we are entering a new type of social life.” When we are “together sometimes,” when we “do it with others,” when we vocalise our anguish and anger to make the world afresh, then, at least for an extended moment, possibilities burst open.

Chapter Five, Conclusion

Revisiting the Research Questions

Computer technology would increase power, opportunities, and leisure time, especially for members of the “Knowledge Class” who were the inheritors of Adam Smith's “Philosophers,” sociologists once predicted. Yet instead the “age of digital Taylorism” has refined new methods of exploitation as the “New Economy” dumps a plethora of underpaid jobs on us, and technology which trails us home from work like a stray dog (Brown, Ashton & Lauder 2010: 11). Nevertheless, the much touted information revolution has delivered relatively affordable production tools and a technologically-competent, creative, and restless body of people to whom the organisational form of the network is native.

Post-Autonomist theory frames the dramatic shifts in social relations arising from the transition from industrialism to post-industrialism. Its proponents announce possibilities for a radical societal reordering which is immanent to globalised capitalism's techno-social structures, and driven by loosely linked archipelagos of localised experimentation from below. We have crafted our tools for thinking to mirror (and to surpass in some respects) the human mind in its plasticity, speed, and concurrent multitasking ability. Our minds are able to infinitely generate imagination, thought, language, symbols, and relationships, and as social beings, we are compelled to communicate, cooperate, and share that which we create. If ideas, language, knowledge, and society are all socially produced in the realm of the common, then so too societal change will be seeded there.

Herein lies the possibility for emancipation, wildfire insurrections dotted over the planet, an unarmed revolution which does not seek to take power but to dissolve it. The form is nebulous, continually evolving. This brings us to the two research questions we started with:

> To what extent is information technology a productive force creating new collective forms of social imagination and political agency?
>
> How is information technology socialised to create embodied cultural projects, contexts, and networks which cross-pollinate on localised, translocal, and transglobal levels?

I sought answers within the cultural field, specifically where media activism, digital

culture, and emergent art forms interconnect, suspecting that my empirical research could test a theory which largely has neglected cultural and media production. How then did the case studies answer these questions?

Conclusions Drawn from the Three Cases

The three cases are emplaced in starkly contrasting geopolitical and socio-cultural contexts: Hong Kong In-Media is situated in the newly-industrialised Periphery and critiques journalistic practice; the Container Project is situated in the developing global South and critiques digital creativity and education practice; Furtherfield is situated in the post-industrial global North and critiques contemporary art practice. While acknowledging that such bald categorisations can be problematic, they serve to indicate the spatial and informational spread of these social laboratories. This differentiation amongst the cases has been critical to my research, as any discoveries of shared praxes and outcomes will support subsequent generalisations about the role of the digital in producing agency and social change.

These hives of experimentation deliver to their respective immediate constituents and to wider networks the following: investigative journalism and mediated forms of protest, digital contexts for collective learning and art production, and social software and conceptual frames for making networked art. Moreover, they produce distinctive permanent, semi-permanent and transient spatial contexts for participatory production and exchange. Importantly, each case has socialised their core technologies, using constituents' feedback and networks' resources. Each case aggregates people (variously termed users, participants, networks, communities, and neighbourhoods) who are linked by common visions. Thus the cases populate network cultures which then interact with other networks of cultural production and social activism. Finally, the cases are producing new social imaginaries, evident as fragments, tendencies, trends, and patterns. These imaginaries adopt different expressions, reflecting each project's socio-cultural realities, but all summon radical transformation on a planetary scale. Such individually experienced, collectively expressed engagement is energising emergent social movements around the world. Hence we could consider the cases as manifesting qualities of a global *Zeitgeist*.

The social imaginary which Hong Kong In-Media's citizen journalists are constructing via their embodied and discursive actions centres on democracy, and in particular, participatory democracy. They believe that media democracy is a precursor to political democracy, and that people must step up and take actions themselves to achieve both. Each cycle of struggles provides opportunities to dig in to (mainly) localised issues, and

reframe and analyse their dynamics with reference to the broader power relations of the co-dependent expressions of state authoritarianism and globalised capitalism within a neoliberal framework. Consequently each cycle aggregates empirical and abstract knowledges about the machinations of power, and returns this knowledge to the commons. Here it can inform other social struggles, building an energy and intellectual momentum which ripples outwards.

As Hong Kong In-Media takes a deliberately non-aligned position within a relatively factionalised activism and NGO landscape, it attracts a heterogeneous mass of reader-writers deterred by ideologically rigid projects. The project's network-based decision-making and organisational structure materialises its intention to be socially inclusive. Members regard pluralism and individualised expression as critical components feeding the evolution of a democratic public sphere in Hong Kong. As the project also faces outwards to others engaged in comparable struggles in the (mainly) north-east Asian region and Chinese-speaking diaspora, it actively produces translocalism. To be a member of the Hong Kong In-Media citizen journalist network implies that by association one is also connected to networks of critical practice elsewhere.

The original Interlocals website was a premature attempt to materialise those network connections through shared journalistic labour. However, networks need their own time and natural processes to evolve. Consequently Interlocals morphed into a network for meta-level reflections on media activism, some of which were crystallised in the old technology form of the printed book. It is paradoxical that sometimes new ephemeral media craves old tangible media, and perhaps a printed anthology holds a certain gravitas and historical permanency which a website or e-book does not.

Subjects of collective discussion on the Hong Kong In-Media website arise from the reader-writer base, with some issues igniting sustained campaigns. These instantiate the concept of “action media,” which builds alternating/overlapping sequences of embodied actions and online reflections. Iterative processes allow affective, creative, and analytical responses to grow organically, nurturing an intersubjective space in which both the social imaginary and its nascent material expression can evolve. There is a haphazardness about this evolution which I suspect could be critical. Creative interventions generate affective responses which in turn propel embodied solidarity actions. Importantly, contemporaneous critical analysis enables people to move beyond raw emotions (anger, frustration, disgust) and constrained sentiments (nostalgia, regret) to connect local issues with the global, and plan strategic and tactical responses accordingly. Participants not only “become the media” in the Indymedia sense, but they also 'become-issue', as they increasingly take risks through progressively deepened levels of engagement. This process recalls comparable Freirean approaches

born in another time and place which interweave critical consciousness and action.

The social imaginaries collectively built by Container Project participants are also about social change, but generally on a more local rather than national, regional, or meta-level (at least from the perspective of first-time workshoppers). Mutual interest lies in seeding local empowerment, nurturing micro changes which over time will effect the macro. Jamaican participants in the Container Project's first manifestation entered with limited life opportunities, for although the country had been integral to capitalism's growth, life for most under Babylon's rule was arduous. A single “sufferah” who previously had accompanied his contemporaries on a downward spiral came to envisage a space for creative experimentation which could incubate long-term personal and community change. His vision embodied core Rastafari political goals including the poor's self-empowerment and the reordering of social relations. The expansiveness of these goals has inspired broad participation, with an eclectic, elastic network of artists, educators, and activists evolving around the project. Nodes within this network connect into national, Caribbean, international, and affinity networks, exchanging ideas, introductions, and practical help.

Container projects offer communities uncontainment, the chance for people to unravel the past by collectively repositioning themselves as part of a future seeded from below. Technology is “repatriated” from info-capitalism's heartlands to rural and street economies, and then socialised by being embedded within inventive social architectures. The converted shipping container and the reverse-engineered wheelie bin are metaphorical hardwares running software programs which execute social change. The enveloping material architecture casts a spell, summoning the virtuosos (everyone) to imagine and communicate that which exists already (rhythms, memories, histories), and that which comes into existence through being spoken, sung, and danced. As people inhabit 'temporary affective spaces' (sites which interweave creative and social processes to generate positive affects), community rifts heal as positive ways of thinking about oneself and of being together override existing scripts.

Unstructured skilling and art programs require people to trust in organic processes, encouraging cooperative learning and play in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Being digitally literate accords participants the status of experts, bringing with it the responsibility to share their knowledge. This positions the Container Project within the wider praxis of free culture, giving it a commonality with projects across a broad spectrum of politicised experimentation. ICTs are bridges into new circuits of production and exchange, in which the fruits of biopolitical labour of the poor can now enter the domain of the common. Culture is socially produced through what is common, and freedom to innovate within postindustrial remix culture is vital. When works

produced by "ourstream" *(*those on the margins) enter wider circuits they inevitably impact upon the mainstream. Eventually, as ourstream proliferates across networks, sub-networks, and meta-networks, it will attain critical mass and the margins will dissolve the centre (if indeed it is even possible to still speak of a centre). This provides a clue to how changing the world without assuming power could transpire in a deeply mediated, informatised near-future.

Jamaica is poised to enter the postindustrial paradigm from a dual preindustrial/ deindustrialised position, as are some of the other locales in which the Container Project operates. A culture of grassroots production can improve makers' material circumstances, when they either strategically commodify some output, or sell their digital skills in the marketplace. Eventually these creative labourers might join postindustrialism's "precariat" and be faced with new forms of exploitation. However, to be (under)recompensed for one's virtuosity instead of being discounted as "worthless rubbish" does not mean necessarily that developmentalism has triumphed. Rather, the Container produces militant subjectivity within a new political composition of technologically adept people who insist that they are worth something. Their experiences will feed into larger, networked classes of biopolitical workers, shaping future cycles of struggles.

The social imaginary which Furtherfield participants are building through their collaborative praxis centres on cultural democracy, especially within the new fields which the internet opens up. Furtherfield uses the internet both as a territory to investigate in its own right, and as a medium for self-reflexive collective production of networked practices. Art's pointy nose has always poked into places which its conservative practitioners ignore or discount. Of little interest to a speculative art market rooted in preindustrial craft practices, postindustrial financial speculation, and artificial scarcity, the internet remains a largely unterritorialised site of artistic experimentation. Furtherfield's founders and associates translate ideas and methods from earlier art movements (Situationism, Fluxus) and local subcultures (Punk, pirate radio), and, like curious boffins, embed them into the net's vast petri dish to see what happens. Punk's DiY street culture becomes network art's DIWO as artists, writers, and programmers bricolage embodied and electronic encounters into strange formations. Such participatory production and "media democratisation" counters elitist propaganda that art is a special activity for special people. Instead it explicitly reveals and enacts the social construction of knowledge and culture, and returns the outcomes of inventiveness to the common for mutual enjoyment and open-ended reiteration.

Finding existing tools for online collaboration over networks to be inadequate, small Furtherfield teams socialise technology by building social software which coalesces and

disperses creativity over the internet. Some results such as VisitorsStudio have been ground-breaking, combining functions which commercial products did not possess. Technological socialisation is a dynamic cooperative process which identifies needs, sources ideas and labour from the network, translates them into code, and then returns the code to the network for beta-testing, debugging, and final release. When users express a need for Version 2.0, the cycle will restart. Experimentation and play replicate the plastic cognitive processes involved in human learning, and are critical to the production of the new. Moreover play can function as political expression, as it repudiates info-capital's exploitation and privatisation of our mental ingenuity and once-free time. As familiars or strangers playing together, we model alternative ways of being and working together which we can transfer to other contexts.

Furtherfield draws upon network power to create new networks and meta-networks, and digital platforms for building and interrogating network aesthetics and network behaviour. Its “neighbourhoods” are porous and supple, with differentiated degrees of participation reflecting how deeply specific issues and projects have captured people. Activities seed network affects, that is, affective responses arising from the experience of sustained tele-presence (the co-inhabitation of electronic space), pointing to a subject for possible future research. Interestingly, the spatialisation of some Furtherfield activities in its London-based HTTP gallery extends digital network practices, as practitioners from around Britain and the world gather for residencies, workshops, performances, and exhibitions. These embodied situations anchor both the ephemeral and electronic, and the translocal and transglobal, in a localised context. The embedded is subsequently disembedded, with many of HTTP's productive outcomes returned via the internet to the domain of the common. This cyclic form of building momentum and knowledge production recalls action media praxis.

Commonalities Revealed by the Four Lines of Analysis

Recurrent themes emerge from this summation of the cases, suggesting that we can abstract some generalisations about the relationship between information technology, cultural activism, political agency, and social transformation. But firstly let us return to the original analytical structure applied to each case—their drivers, platforms, specificity, and emancipatory programs, to highlight areas of commonality.

Starting with the drivers, all three cases posit creative interactivity against social hierarchy, opposing prevailing informational orders within the fields of journalism, digital creativity and education, and art. The protagonists of each case identified significant areas of lack in their specific fields, and addressed them by creating

something entirely new from the ground up, learning as they went, drawing upon the common. They experiment with alternative social orders by building hybridised organisational forms which meld horizontal and network-based creative production and decision-making, with lean forms of managerial responsibility and/or oversight of core financial and administrative functions.

Critically, all cases coalesce a constellation of diverse struggles over power, but none are rigidly ideologically driven or promote fixed political programs. Instead they embrace various individualised political expressions along a spectrum ranging from anarchist to progressive/reformist positions. This supports the argument that new social movements are underpinned by openness to individual perceptions, experience, and political expressions within a loosely-defined collective vision of the possibility of another world (or worlds). Contemporary activism and its "theoretical reflection" is marked by "the plurality of thinking without division into camps," says Hardt (Kinsman 2007), a tendency dating from the 1990s when people discovered that "autonomy and difference...build movements" (ibid.). The cases exemplify projects in which people work collaboratively "without insisting that [they] must always agree" (ibid.). Furthermore, the free expression of intellectual and ethical disagreement can deepen critical awareness of an issue, as we have seen for example in the environmental and urban development campaigns which Hong Kong In-Media facilitated.

The second line of analysis focussed on platforms and processes, and the third line on aspects of spatial, historical, and cultural specificity. My research suggests that platforms are modulated by specificities and thus need to be considered holistically. Projects manifest out of collective embodied experimentation which is locally rooted,[315] globally aware, and socially and technologically networked. For instance, all three projects have built or customised techno-social platforms in which are embedded traces of localised influences, whether these be Hong Kong protest lineages, Rastafarian linguistic innovation, or British pirate radio. The argument that software is culture can be expanded to the proposition that hardware too is culture, and both can be further encultured by the social architectures in which they are emplaced.

Bare technology is never neutral but shaped by successive confluences of historical, political, social, economic, and cultural factors. Each project seeks to be relevant to its intended communities of practice by purposefully socialising the technologies it offers. Tools are also extensions of ourselves, expanding our capacity to create and refine our worlds, and therefore they are most useful when we can find ourselves

315 This locality can be partially nomadic in geographical terms (as is particularly the case with the Container's outreach programs), or local in relation to positioning on the electronic domain (as with Furtherfield's conceptualisation of local net neighbourhoods).

reflected in them. For millennia humans have embellished their tools, and perhaps this is now even more important when our tools are so complex that we can no longer fashion them from scratch with our own hands. Therefore when we acquire our tools, we need to refashion them, to make them our own. Both the fuel and the forge in our smithy is the collective intelligence.

The cases draw on local knowledges and (sub)cultural traditions, and feed off local contexts, to embed emergent digital practices in the socially familiar. This localisation bestows an immediate authenticity on the projects. These cultural activists are not tethering technology exclusively to either spatialised parochiality or sectoral monogamy. Rather, the instantiation of the local, particularly when it is responding to deeply interconnected global currents and tendencies, can resonate translocally via the internet and embodied interchanges. Iterative processes of translocalism come into play, as ideas and models seep slowly or leap dramatically into other places, communities, campaigns, and experiments. These movements transfer energy and inspire new mutations of practice and tools, which in turn can feed back into the originating sites. A useful way of thinking about “interconnection across difference” comes from anthropologist Anna Tsing (2004: 1-4). Emergent “cultural forms” and local practices “grip” onto the global through “cross-cultural and long-distance encounters,” resulting in the continual co-production of culture via interactions best described as “friction.”

Applying these ideas about translocalism to the cases, we see that their platforms and processes have resonated interlocally with people similarly craving social reordering. For example, Hong Kong In-Media, in association with like-minded, net-based media activism groups in the region, incorporated discursive elements and network processes of its local citizen journalism site into the nascent Interlocals web platform. By translating and culturally contextualising citizen journalism, participants joined their localised struggles within a broader-based political critique and space for solidarity. Ultimately however, despite their enthusiasm people lacked the time and linguistic skills for this work and so their individual “grips” could not gain long-term purchase. Accordingly Interlocals transformed itself into a translocal meta-level critique of digital media activism. A different example comes from the Container Project's 2007 Australian workshop tour in which rural indigenous community workers conceptually localised a plan for their own Container-style lab within an abandoned train carriage; likewise workshop participants in a remote village in Guyana designed a community radio iStreet Lab sited in the ubiquitous tin drum of fruit juice vendors.

The local produces the translocal, and the translocal produces the transglobal. All produce the common. The cases use their platforms to generate ideas, artefacts, and

social processes which enter an unbounded public realm. Their activities counter info-capitalism's tendency to enclose, to privatise, and to keep secret. Free platforms for free expression which will not be flogged off reflect underlying principles which oppose the tendency of corporate mass social networking platforms, search engines, and content-sharing platforms to monetise and commodify 'user data,' 'user-generated content,' and technological innovation via interlocking systems of enclosures. Thus core principles about free culture and participatory production are implicitly embedded within the cases' platforms, just as the General Public License (GPL) attached to free software applications is a principle explicitly embedded through a legal mechanism.

Communities of practice,[316] and networks of practice, have emerged organically around the cases. Hong Kong In-Media's mainly localised network of reader-writers advances a vision for a democratic Hong Kong and mainland China, and a world not driven by neoliberal imperatives. Media activist groups in the region exchange ideas, information, and practical resources with Hong Kong In-Media, and this cooperative praxis co-builds border-crossing networks of practice. The Container Project created its first base of users in Palmers Cross, but from the outset this community of practice folded in transglobal nodes formed by external contributing artists, activists, technicians, educators, and grassroots groups. Through subsequent outreach programs, the Container Project has seeded spatially-rooted communities of practice elsewhere, who become nodes within the expanding Container network. As Container alumni become peer facilitators and travel with the project, they become active network builders themselves, physically embodying Mongrel's concept of Poor-to-Poor exchange. Artists, writers, programmers, and curators engaged with network art gravitate to Furtherfield, self-building “network neighbourhoods” via specific art projects and online fora. Furtherfield links into other networks of practice through its participation on international media art lists, and via cross-disciplinary collaborations such as Furthernoise.

One final point about platforms and processes is that all three case combine orderly technological systems (for example, Hong Kong In-Media's front-end interface and back-end database, the iStreet Lab's compact internal design, and Furtherfield's customised software programs) with relatively disorderly social contexts in which the technology is emplaced (for instance, protests, unstructured workshops, and improvisational art events). The technological appears hierarchical and predictable in comparison with the

316 One of the term's originators, cognitive anthropologist Etienne Wenger (2006), describes “communities of practice” as “groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.” We could adapt this concept to encompass networks of practice, a topic perhaps for future research.

open-ended and anarchic social, although of course technology can fall over without warning, while the social can endure disturbance and perturbations (Marshall & Zowghi 2010). Perhaps it could be that this tension between order and disorder contributes to a socially generative force. Protagonists from all cases have pointed out that if the (action media) scripts were already written, or if (artistic or learning) outcomes were known beforehand, there would have been a lesser degree of involvement in specific campaigns, workshops, or performance events. The chaotic unknown has a certain pulling power, daring us to take risks, thereby heightening affective engagement.

The fourth line of analysis applied to the cases looked at emancipatory processes, where my discussions took a more speculative form. I contend that these are transformational projects which produce new social imaginaries through the artefacts, processes, and actions they spawn. For example, Hong Kong In-Media experimented with various ways of strengthening translocal critique and solidarity; the Container Project mongrelised its program and tools to take them into even more hard-pressed situations, and Furtherfield coalesced anger about the Iraq war and the failures of representative democracy into a transnational art event. The cases share an overall vision of a transition from atomisation, territorialisation, and hierarchy, towards collectivism, deterritorialisation, and horizontalism. The shared energies, socially-engaged creative interventions, and political achievements add to a global groundswell of action which inspires people in other situations and informational fields to initiate their own liberatory projects. The previously mentioned “anomalous wave” concept which figures in transglobal education struggles is useful here, as it connotes a building of momentum which draws strength from internal and transversal diversity, and a purposeful movement forward where radical imaginations materialise in actions amplified via networked-based solidarity. Similarly, all three cases build radical momentum incrementally. Incremental steps can transition to cascading waves, as, mirroring sub-atomic processes, energy is distributed through the medium of a social system.

Throughout this thesis I have demonstrated how informational domination is deeply embedded within postindustrial society. Consequently, liberation from its bonds can be intensely exhilarating. Articulated across radically different locations and informational fields, all three cases attempt to reterritorialise dominant modes of hierarchic, objectifying, atomising informational fields. Such projects inspire, support, and generate other interventions from below, as they show what is possible in the here and now, with or without external funding or institutional support. This is Punk attitude to its DiY core, minus the nihilism of “No Future.” These projects resonate broadly, as the problems people face in the era of globalised capitalism share the same root causes. As

part of a planetary constellation of liberatory projects, these three cases have crafted their culturally-specific methods to challenge the prevailing order through their social and productive actions.

I next decouple the commonalities from the lines of analysis, to take a wider view of the underlying dynamics the cases reveal. This takes us to another level of abstraction, in which we can interweave concepts drawn from the theory in light of our journey though these three projects.

Broader Implications of the Research Findings

We, the Factory: Re-routing the Mind Work of the Multitudes

Post-Autonomists liberated Marx's "general intellect" from capitalist-owned machines, returning it to lodge in our inventive minds which cannot be owned (at best only rented far too cheaply). However, info-capitalism is in the repossession business, and therefore attempts to recapture our "generic human faculties" such as "language, memory, sociability...[and] the capacity for abstraction and learning," as these are postindustrialism's iron ore (Virno 2004: 41). My cases demonstrate how countervailing projects also aggregate the fruits of these faculties, with some crucial differences. Whereas capital commodifies, cultural activism decommodifies, using digital bridges to return translucent goods to the realm of the common. Here our brilliant sparks burn ceaselessly as the flames are fuelled by tinder from the grassroots. This fire is the furnace for not only further collective production of imagination, knowledge, and culture, but also for social and political agency. What is left to say but "Burn, baby, burn!"[317]

Industrialisation created hegemonic tendencies in its own image across the social plane, so that many aspects of life became rigidified along the lines of the factory model. Postindustrialisation spawned a new paradigm, and we ourselves are the factory, our machines on 24 hours a day, every day, our creativity a handmaiden to capital. This imperative to be constantly switched on stirs new forms of sabotage, stealing from the powerful by blogging or Face-ing at work, the net as the new office

317 This phrase was made famous by being uttered Black activist William Epton during the Harlem uprising in 1964 (Harris 1968). Epton was subsequently convicted of criminal anarchy (ibid. 717). His case became an important test of the freedom of political expression. Epton identified the "enemy" in terms similar to the Rastas' construction of Babylon, speaking of a "white power structure which oppresses all blacks and many whites" (ibid. 713), one which could only be destroyed by a generalised revolution.

stationary cabinet to be continually pilfered. However, such petty theft and digital narcissism are no world changers. If anything these individualised rebellious acts retard social transformation, as the net becomes the digital Ketamine for the masses, that Facebook fix or aimless web drift momentarily distracting us from the stressful banality and general pointlessness of much work.

However, people committed to social change can employ these identical tools to challenge and destabilise capitalism from within. We employ the organisational form of the network to operate on multiple fronts, both tactically and strategically, simultaneously and sequentially, in escalating iterations of collective action and reflection. By reclaiming our time and our imagination, redirecting it to socially-engaged projects which have meaning for us, and by interlinking our struggles, we enter the chaotic but dynamic meta-project of building other worlds. No blueprint exists, no consensus has been reached, we know relatively few of our fellow travellers, and we are guided more by intuition than by ideology. This formlessness can be taken as a good omen, for according to the ancient Greeks, "verily at the first Chaos came to be," and from Chaos the Earth was born (Hesiod 1914, no page numbers). If the task with recreating the world now lies with a network of strangers, we must first embrace chaos.

Where does ideology fit in this scenario of loosely-affiliated activist networks? On the one hand we have a general repudiation of rigid and unquestioning adherence to ideology, a position which distinguishes this genre of world-building from others, such as those undertaken by religious fundamentalists of all stripes aiming to create national and world societies in some god's image. On the other hand, there is broad identification with a constellation of progressive/leftist/anarchist ideologies, which we can see materialised most clearly in the massive internationalised demonstrations against capitalism/neoliberalism/globalisation/war several times each year in shifting locations. Although it might be impossible to adopt a non-ideological position within social change projects, perhaps what exists now is an identification with meta-ideology or an acceptance of nested ideologies. As no overarching political program or heroic leaders exist, cultural activists can experiment freely with shaping social imaginaries. By interweaving embodied and distributed experiences we build momentum, histories, and emergent tendencies portending possible futures.

Post-Autonomism lumps capital's insurgents together under the banner of the multitude, that manifestation of "singularity plus cooperation," a form of "political organisation and of social life...based on a relation of differences" (Hardt, quoted in Hawthorne 2006, no page number).[318] I have evidenced this general tendency in my own

318 The experience of second wave feminism which declared that "the personal is political" and

research although it is premature to announce unreservedly the existence of "the multitude." Perhaps the term's historical baggage is partly to blame, as Spinoza's multitude squared off with Hobbes' people in a socio-political frame knotted to the Cartesian co-ordinates of a spatialised Enlightenment. Hence we have the definite article "the" preceding "multitude," where maybe the uncertainty of the indefinite "a" would serve us better. In the age of networks, we might imagine "a multitude" which is one of many multitudes, and from this mess of multitudes the "other worlds" will arise. The open-ended nature of contemporary cultural activism, the deliberate rejection of fixed programs in favour of agile actions, and the commitment to be as inclusive as possible, all mitigate against that behemoth rendering of multitude, pluralistic though it might be.

If something approximating the hydra of the multitude exists, perhaps it takes the form of a conjoined twin. One many-headed body stands squarely in the domain of info-capital doing the individual work which puts food on the table, and the other hydra-headed body stands equally steadfast in the domain of anti-power, doing the collective work which ultimately will upturn the table! After all, info-capitalism has required its biopolitical subjects to make available their whole-of-life experiences. Similarly, technology-mediated projects of counterpower throw out an open invitation to all who are willing to offer their virtuosity to the task of changing the world step by step, trusting in Chaos/chaos.

A Mantra: The Revolution will not be Televised, but Technology will be Socialised.

It might be hard for us to admit it, but no matter how smart we think we are making technology, it is not sentient or self-aware. Artificial intelligence and thinking machines from *2001: A Space Odyssey's* HAL to *Battlestar Galactica*'s Cylons enliven popular culture, but our beasts are still dumb, and it is we who need to be smarter with them.

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subsequently led to new cooperative relations amongst previously separated groups and individuals could be brought to bear on this. Like feminism, the multitude is an "organisational project," which requires active organisation from below to be made manifest; hence Hardt speaks of a "not yet multitude" (quoted in Hawthorne 2006 n. p.). One of the critiques of second wave feminism was that it was driven largely by White privileged elites who ignored the concerns of other groups of women (Indigenous, non-White, poor). Whilst these excluded groups have been driving many of the circuits of anti-globalisation, anti-capitalism, and anti-neoliberalism, their voices are not generally present in theoretical discourse. As with feminism, this leaves the theory lacking the diversity of which it speaks.

The more power is informationalised, the more urgent the challenge becomes. As the accelerated integration of information technology into personal life and societal functioning proliferates across national borders and professional sectors, sites of power are not necessarily localised and visible, but more frequently networked, invisible, and increasingly unaccountable. Globalised capitalism disembeds power from its familiar bases (church, State, judiciary, military), and disperses it through a complex sprawl of interconnected government institutions, meta-level supra-national organisations, and transnational corporations.

Power's impact on bodies, communities, and societies is no less intense because it has been dispersed. Nomadic power deals countervailing projects new challenges, as accountability and decision-making move deeper into constantly shifting terrain. Therefore, not only will the revolution "not be televised" nor tweeted,[319] revolutions cannot happen as before as the territory on which to conduct so many (but clearly not all) struggles is not clearly defined.

Yet the increasing interdependence, interconnectedness, and deterritorialisation of systems of control, production, and exchange is a boon to those working towards social transformation. Activists to whom non-linear cooperative processes are native can operate within techno-social networks more nimbly than State and corporate entities rooted in hierarchical mindsets and orderly methods. The emergent network culture arising from the "acceleration of history and an annihilation of distances" is a "*productive* moment" propelling "social potentials for transformation" (Terranova 2004: 2-3, emphasis in original). This potential is materialising patchily over the "hyperconnected planet," producing kaleidoscopic iterations of radical evolution.

One internet half-life ago digital cultural theorist McKenzie Wark (2004: 297) provided a conceptual jolt saying often and famously, "We no longer have roots, we have aerials." But now it is time to return to roots, to re-establish ourselves in the

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319 Poet/musician Gil Heron-Scott's (1971) proto-rap song 'The revolution will not be televised' is widely regarded as an anthem of the Black Power movement. Its message was that mediated mind-numbing messages will lose their power as "Black people will be in the street looking for a brighter day, and "the revolution will be live" (ibid.). Recently, writer Malcolm Gladwell (2010, no page numbers) transposed this idea to the contemporary mediascape, arguing that "the revolution will not be tweeted" because the "instruments of social media" promote weak ties rather than strong ones, and make the "existing social order more efficient." The implication is that mass networked social media forms support the status quo by promoting both passivity and delusions of radical action, all from the safety of our homes and offices. He contrasts this with the American civil-rights movement which used "high-risk strategies" including boycotts and sit-ins to build momentum and solidarity.

familiar, the material, the immediately present, so we can radiate out rhizomatically in our quest to build the world afresh from the gizzards of capital's long and failing experiment. If the sources and mechanisms of power are more difficult to detect, we need to combine our sensory and mental faculties, to not only divine power, but also to experience one another. We must put ourselves on the line, as well as online.

The need to be emplaced within the social becomes more urgent is as the internet becomes the medium of choice for our experiences, relationships, and transactions. Projects formed around specific struggles need to embed themselves in physical and electronic localities, old and new sub/cultures, affective and technological networks. Network natives must be wary of the trap inherent in those large, generic oppositional projects such as GetUp! (2010) which gather together issues, causes, and campaigns holus bolus, often requiring participants to do no more than be PayPals and e-petitioners. When we risk no more than having our email harvested, when we give no more than a few seconds of our screen attention, do we really expect that our actions will precipitate lasting transformation? As Geert Lovink (2010, no page numbers) noted in a recent position paper entitled *Net Activism in the Late 2.0 Era,* "Cyber cascades a la Avaaz.org create blimps in mass awareness but fail to raise resilience. Rather than subscribing to "slacktivism," we must embrace forms of resistance which carry the "risk of defeat as a real option" (ibid.).

The socialisation of technology is critical to build courageous participation in social struggles. Socialisation processes localise and 'culture-up' technology making it relevant to users. No generic solutions exist although general design principles around interface, accessibility, and so forth will be helpful. Applications and architectures need to be customised by members of projects' user bases in order to maximise cooperation, communication, and the production of affects. Therefore design should not be left only to the most technically skilled members of groups, but opened up to include the contributions of the many. The technology itself cannot be artificially separated from its social context, and therefore attention to things such as group dynamics, decision-making processes, and mutually-agreed upon core principles are important.

When we socialise our tools we give them something of ourselves. As they drift through the networks, becoming nomad, that part of ourselves travels with them. What a contrast with the info-commodities which have locked and black-boxed us out, spawning a dumb dawn of consumers teleshopping for shrink-wrapped commodities. Much better to be inventive tinkerers fiddling with our strange "contraptions."[320]

320 In a recent interview artist/YoHa member Graham Harwood described YoHa's techno-mechanical assemblages as "contraptions" which combined physical materials (such as rare metals bearing traces of social and environmental exploitation), informational processes,

Our Tele(m)bodied Networks: In the Company of Strangers

As culturally and sectorally-specific forms of socialised technology enter the domain of the common they become available for adoption by others in the networks of free exchange. Importantly, innovative forms become inspirations for adaptation rather than blueprints to be slavishly copied, with each iteration re-entering and diversifying the common. This freedom to be copied and re-engineered happens organically, and mostly without the imprimatur of technolibertarian mechanisms associated with the 'official' capital-friendly digital commons (such as Creative Commons licenses). Whereas info-capitalism encloses, its hydra-headed nemesis uncloses, and thus opens numerous sites of techno-social innovation. With the commons already being encroached upon rapaciously by the forces of commodification, we must continually expand our efforts and our collective ingenuity, creating the 'uncommons', and the 'unclosures'.

The "network paradigm" is producing "individuality" rather than "generality," argues McDonald (2006: 33). Within our indigenous networks we dart back and forth between individual and collective modes of being and doing. Opportunities for interlocal and internetwork collaboration expand over time as our networks grow their social nodes and technological resources. We can witness change on our local levels within short time frames, but the larger implications as projects interconnect with one another over longer time frames are harder to detect. No-one has that bird's-eye view of this complex emergent phenomenon. Still, such interconnections enrich the field and amplify individual projects' potential to generate local change through affective solidarity and effective resource sharing.

The construction of portals to coalesce groups and support cross network initiatives increases the potency and reach of individual projects. Self-managed portals aggregate, broadcast and archive content for individualised consumption across a vast meshwork of networks. This scalar power available to the micro is vital when we consider the tendency for monolithic corporatised social networking platforms such as Facebook and YouTube to both control the content of communications, and monitor and monetise user behaviour. However, anecdotal evidence from many cultural activism projects suggests that there are real limits to scalability, with optimum critical mass being relatively small before dialogue and social dynamics break down in one way or another (see, for example, Lovink & Rossiter 2005). The solution could lie in developing more intelligent

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people, and networks (Iles 2010). These "constituent parts" bring the "historical, social, economic, political into proximity with each other to create a moment of reflection and imagining" (ibid.). It could be useful to extrapolate this notion of deftly cobbled yet unpredictable contraptions to the idea of socialised technologies.

systems of interlinking networked-based projects, and reviewing if these meta-meshworks increase scalability or at least make it less grumpy and lumpen.

Information communication technologies are fundamental to our networks, as they are the material carriers of the local into the translocal and the common. However, our networks need to be periodically revitalised, our senses engaged, and our affective responses summoned in ways beyond those which electronic networking can offer. For much of the time cultural activism projects require of us exactly the same which info-capital requires of its biopolitical labourers: cognitive, communicative work performed at a computer, alone. We cooperate yes, but this cooperation is mediated mostly via technology, and so we remain solitary thinkers, doomed to live Aristotle's "life of the stranger." No amount of instant messaging can make up for this solitude.

However, when we share experiences and interventions we no longer feel alone in our anger and frustration. Us "flies caught in a spider's web" seek to collectively emancipate ourselves from this "tangled mess" (Holloway 2005: 5). Our "scream" drives us to seek possibilities for the production of a "*radical otherness*" (ibid. 6). Through the magic of serendipitous synchronicity and the doggedness of purposeful drifts we stumble across "beacons" signposting the travels of others struggling against capital and its bloody machinations "not with a sense of stoic ardor but rather of *insurgent joy,*" declares Stevphen Shukaitis (2007). When we refuse to "separate aesthetics from the flux of the ongoing social domain," our creative practices generate "fleeting moments" from which "radical imagination" is born (ibid.). The work of cultural "pioneers" can be compared with that of the early internet pioneers, whose "strategic acts" were "idealistic endeavours doomed to fail as more general solutions, yet...powerful as exercises in the process of establishing exceptions" (Blace 2010).

Just as it is vital to embed our tools in the social, we must also embed ourselves there. And as we confront postindustrialism's Peak Oil reality, we will need to find new ways to travel across space and time zones to meet our fellow travelers, comparing maps and field notes, and learning from each other under the same starry sky. For unless this happens, we can never have a full sense that real change is afoot, and that together in the company of the strangers, we are helping to create it.

Part of the project of social transformation is to experiment with systems which will coalesce our somewhat divided selves in the presence of others. Often we biopolitical units live in a state of inbetween-ness that interbraids the experience of embodiment—being in our skins, with that of telebodiment—shedding our skins to inhabit the electronic realm. If we can simultaneously experience being in both states, with others similarly drawn to a "social flow of doing" then collectively we are tele(m)bodied. The central (m) might just be the M which marks the spot of the Multitude.

Future Research Indications

I trust that my research will be of use to future travellers investigating the relationship between the digital and the social, the poetic and the political. My own research with the three cases could be further built upon, particularly by gathering and analysing qualitative data from 'ordinary' network members/users and project participants. I have demonstrated unequivocally how and why cultural activists are employing innovative approaches to the development and customisation of information communications technologies to make them relevant to the communities of practice which they have helped build from the ground up. When bare technology is socialised and contextualised within user-sensitive material and creative environments, its potential to be a productive force is increased. A comparative study between groups using off-the-shelf 'unsocialised' technologies and those socialising technologies could yield more data to build upon my findings. The possibility exists that platforms and tools could become over-socialised like a precocious child, leaving users yearning for something more raw and open-ended. Again a comparative study could be useful.

The precise forms of technological socialisation are determined by a constellation of historical, cultural, philosophical, and economic factors, and are made manifest by drawing upon common knowledges and intellectual 'decommodities'. An in-depth study of a small sample of socialised technologies to map the processes involved, from the original concept to the final output could be useful. Currently, my colleague Rohan Webb from Boise State University, Idaho, is undertaking an empirical study on the relationship between socialised technologies, pedagogical methods, and digital literacy within the Container Project, and I look forward to contributing to this project.

My analysis has shown that the organisational form of the network facilitates cultural activism although the expression of this basic form has many nuances. In the projects I studied the network form co-exists relatively smoothly with more hierarchical forms. This suggests that a symbiotic relationship can exist between two fundamentally different forms of social organisation, pointing to another topic of investigation. The issue of size and scalability of network-based groups and projects invites the question of whether an optimal size exists beyond which loose ties and haphazardness are not helpful. Is a field of smaller networks more stable and productive than a field of much larger networks? Can damaged networks self-repair or is it better to start afresh?

Although ICTs are integral to the production of both ideas and collective forms of political agency, they do not replace our human desire to be together in the same place. By creating periodic spatialised and temporal contexts for “being together sometimes,” cultural activists ensure that momentum built mainly online will not

diminish or dissipate prematurely. Perhaps the pleasure we take in inhabiting what I call (tipping my hat to Hakim Bey) "temporary affective spaces" or "transient affective spaces" (TAS) is a fundamental part of what it is to be human. Creating TAS offers postindustrialism's progeny a comparable space for shared contemplation and wild ceremony as enjoyed by people the world over for millennia. Changing the world is exhausting work, and embodied experiences can replenish us. The TAS concept invites further investigation, and the pre-digital history of the locus of the three cases or new case studies could be a useful starting point. If we determine that TAS predates postindustrialism, then we can explore how the digital builds upon this, and how TAS and telepresence combine to produce subjectivity. In our networks of cohorts perhaps we are becoming multitude through the transit from being strangers to familiars.

More research across an even broader spectrum of digitally-enabled cultural and social activism projects is needed if we are to better understand if the unifying dynamics I have identified are valid more generally. With more detailed analyses of how different grassroots groups are socialising technologies we can build up an archive of particular instances. A critical analysis of such an archive could augment theoretical propositions and existing empirical research which suggest the existence of an emergent, transglobal, networked phenomenon. As we develop our understanding (through both formal research, informal observations, and lived experiences) of how it is being made manifest, we can better apprehend the new constitutive subjectivities that are arising from it. If we too are committed to fundamental social change then it serves our interests to understand both the maps and the territories of the contested domains of human existence and experience.

For now it is time to cast off with verse, for poetry might just be the essential techne with which to imagine and then craft a better future.

The Persian mystic poet Rumi wrote in the 13th century:

Look how the caravan of civilization
has been ambushed.
Fools are everywhere in charge.

Together we reply:

Let us make new networks with tin cans and string.
Let us cloak our data bodies with the fallen feathers of bronze wing pigeons.
We shall reconfigure our private selves, rejecting all that demeans and
diminishes our spirits.
And revel in a common merrymaking.

Casting Away

Look at your eyes. They are small,
*but they see enormous things.**

Everyday days the prophesies must be cast, this is not optional.

Yet I have needled this little area into utter ruins,
forgetting that *to be guided by fragrance*
*is one hundred times better than following tracks.**

A dragonfly sails out towards the great fire,
his boat filled with flowers and tears.

Whispered voices in a strange tongue, invisible licks from behind, jolts of pleasure.
Over-scaled grey room menaces, as somewhere
a diminished baby, glass jarred, struggles to breathe.

Dimmi che mi ami, dimmi che mi ami, dimmi che mi ami . . .
(Tell me that you love me . . .)

From a never ending staircase *a strident voice prevails:*
*We kill children here.***

Vitrines housing dead media,
perfect retro, rife with references.

Cree ate her, a ceremony
bringing renewal after great hardship.

Worlds away, a lone green man exhaled the shout,
shattering the sky in translation.

Hacking protocols, the foam witch walks across channels,
works across platforms,
staging intimate pre-hearsals for states of catastrophe.

Jollies rogered, hammered repeatedly,
whilst a riot of flags are hurled onto pyres.

Ancient bridges of white stone dumb bombed.
Later, on the rebuild, a boy shot in the back of the head,
fifteen years vanish without a flicker.

More slash than dot, peer to peer is dangerous here,
empire's humanitarian new clothes concealing the tawdried sameness.

Resist! she said
Dead roses cascade from her multiplying mouths

Stay together friends
*Don't scatter, and sleep**

Here our children perish slowly,
    flies stuck to the corners of their green weeping eyes.
The living dead—the structurally readjusted hidden from history,
    leave their deserts, their mountains, their forest remnants.
Cloaked in possum skins and the feathers of bronze-wing pigeons,
    they are gunning for battle.

The machine roars, yawns, swallows naked diesel,
    asset-stripped and all alone.

Mirror, mirror, on the wall
    Who is the most linked of them all?

There is no society, only ~~individuals~~ continuous live feed on networked monitors.

With no mind we open souls, pledging:
    Tomorrow, together, we will be okay.

Constant, slow movement teaches us to keep working
like a small creek that stays clear,
that doesn't stagnate, but finds a way
*through numerous details, deliberately.**

Five signs, five continents:

An elk with broken antlers.

A tree walking through mud each dusk.

Horsemen emerging from a dry stone wall.

A wedding party bombed dumb, a general exxonerated.

Snake swallows self, becoming eagle.

The warming is upon you.

Step away from the keyboard.

To capture more than mere moments of mobility and presence,

prepare to set sail for higher lands in flotillas of rotting tankers.

Beware—sections of trouble change and swim.

Sirens transformed into pink birds

join voices in perilous chorus.

Pass through darkness with eyes closed, in order to see.

Oceans are corridors for hauntings,

opening up the impossible.

And after the data cores have melted
and salt river veins bled dry,

before my face is scorched back to bone

and my ears closed over,

I will feel your thoughts still,

through the rattle of ghost wires

and tugs of string networks.[321]

321 Poem originally written as a catalogue text for the 'Encoding experience: 10 October 2008, 17:26 EST' exhibition at CAST Gallery, Hobart.

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Technical Note

In the spirit of free software, this manuscript has been prepared using the word processing application within the OpenOffice open source office software suite.