

blackout jersey

Displacement: A Molecular Map of Discomforts

by Paula
Cobo-Guevara

These modest notes are the result of a molecular mapping working across the microcosms and effects linked to displacement – in relationship to the experience of composing politically and affectively within a new city. The context of this 'arrival' into this new territory is situated from my experience within the construction of a mostly precarious feminist collective. These are preliminary notes resulting from the relationships across a diagram of feelings and affects in the context of experimenting the death of this group.

These lines of text are pretty much situated from a collapsed desire in a body ('my' body), from fatigue and **exhaustion**. A molecular map – of perhaps – micro symptomatologies. So, in a clumsy way, this is **individually or individually** a map of mostly draft-like questions and reticence around various discomfort(s) within this process; they appear as intuitions, lines of conflict, crystallizations and dynamics of subjectivation on the notions of feeling displaced: collectively, **individually** – but also it's as vectors of possibility and intensity.

Inside (and but also outside the borders of the map): a constellation of different bodies being moved, affected, seduced by a place and by others; their ways/modes of encounters, compositions, decomposition, mutation, the body's capacity to affect and be affected; the ecology of relationships and conversations that made me/us, me/you/we feel moved. The capacity to project a desire – but also the **capacity** to sustain it, and the capacity to mutate this same image into something else.

One of the molecular elements that I followed within this process was experimenting with high doses of individualism within a collectivity. It's sad passion: the *maladie du siècle*: anxiety, isolation, enclosure; but also within this same nodes of problematics, the capacity to re-elaborate this negative affect and mutate this collapsed desire into other machine. Hopefully this map serves as a visualizing tool to further unfold and spur into intervention strategies to deal both **individually** and collectively with these questions that transverse us in many different ways.

exper-iences or ex-
periences

Moving and translating from different locations and subjective territories, in some cases mobilized by the force of affections, crystallizations, love, networks. Escaping those apparatuses of capture such as the nuclear family, class condition, gender, identity, etc. A flee from those dominant forms of subjection; perhaps seduced by intense political moments, collective endouers. The potency of experimenting 'escape' as a liberating practice – in straight relation to an exit of a deeply inscribed neoliberal subjectivity. In short, actively (and reactively) moving from different milieus of geography, territory, stories; institutional settings, life **experiences** and vital experimentations. Certainly, the most immanent to these common stories is the desire to disarticulate and re-articulate the forms that configure us creatively, emotionally, socially, politically. Experiment the ways in which you relate and navigate life, affects, relationships, networks, friendships, and a myriad of formal and informal vinculations. We all carry these stories, trajectories, and knowings – these, deeply shaped by these specific forms of subjectivities and identities formed at the core of that what you escaped or fled from, and that under specific lines of conflict appear, out of dust, and activate specific ghosts – fears.

MOLECULAR EXODUS.

Construct and see which are our territories, which are our worlds, our chaos; the alterities in which we move in; where my body starts, where the other body starts, the forms of contact, of composition. Which one is my territory? Which one is my clan? My tribe?

POWER.

We can think of displacement itself as a biopolitical diagram, in which all of the spectrums of our lives are subject to specific forms of subjectifications and power relationships; from forms of citizenship/non-citizenship, to multiple forms

of exclusion and discrimination; to forms of labour and precarity, mistranslations, and an infinity of power relationships. We could think of inhabiting as a very concrete strategy of orientation, a technology of situatedness within this process; we could also visualize it as an affirmative pink line, hacking along this biopolitical diagram of power. From a micropolitical perspective, the forms of being affected, bonded, articulated, our capacity of composition, of being moved – with and by other individual and collective bodies, stories, and life experiences.

encount-ers

WALK, FALL,
MOVE.

Walk, fall, compose: reorient and find forms of (well-) being between this shifting relationships, vectors and lines along this biopolitical diagram of relations. Everything feels and looks as movement, as velocity: flows of images bodies, **encount-ers**, shallow information, tweets, likes, networks, cities, continents. Inhabiting fluid lives, fluid cities, liquid societies. Gas runs through our bodies, and the shadows of our individualized lives, and neoliberal habits – these are deeply embodied in the way we act, feel, sense, perceive and react. I usually feel disoriented, disturbed or overexcited by (personal) feelings and (collective) affects. How to find senses of orientation? To cross through, and experiment in embodied terms an active practice of situating oneself within a new territory – a new city? We actively encounter with new bodies, friends, loves, political processes, networks and forms of organization. Positioning and movement in this case might relate to articulating, assembling and weaving old stories with those things and people who are new to come. Walk, fall, move through the city and make everyday efforts to build and develop habits around a series of forms of maintaining and sustaining constituent vinculations and relationships, enabling a series of forms of well-beings.

ENCOUNTER.

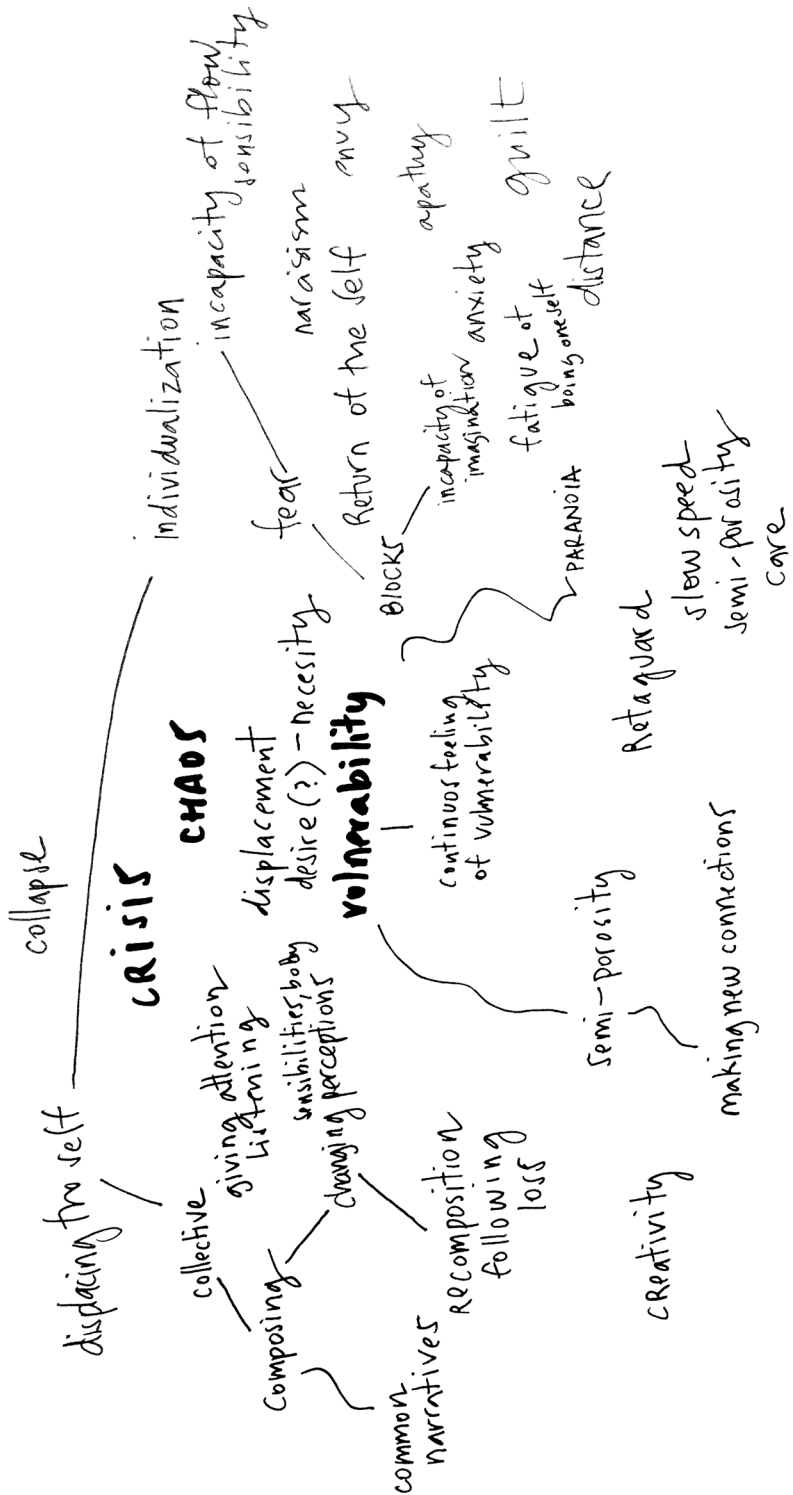
How to collectively construct a network that is not only constituted by affect or pure affinity, neither nor a space of pure resonance; but as a dispositive – an institution that allow this same networks of affinity, of friendship, of love, of care to formalize? The lack of these dispositives, of this forms of institutions leads to states of lethargy; the sad passions. The lack of a solid time-based networks of care – from families to friends to work – often produces a disruptive state of sensing a continuous form of vulnerability and fragility, like drifting upon a slippery slope. Yes, this is an active line of tension – there is also a potency immanent to this moment. How to follow the molecular path of these affects, and create something out of that? Enjoying the pleasure of proximity and experimentation, encounters that are happy and joyful, desirous, sensible, disinterested. However there's also a constant sense of tension and ambivalence within the articulation of this new relational encounters and relationships – sometime we long for a sense of belonging, sometimes a more detached forms of vinculation. There's a phrase that has become heavily resonant for some time and it illustrates in a beautiful way this condition (and contradiction): A subjectivity that is more schizo, flowing, rhizomatic, having more to do with surroundings and resonances, or distances and encounters, than ties? Would it be possible to read from this perspective contemporary attitudes, no longer dissenting against a disciplinary society and its rigid logic of belonging and affiliation, but rather against a surveillance society, with its flexible mechanisms for monitoring and conjugating flows?¹

FEAR.

A question and concern that constantly appears – almost as a collective symptom – is, that we constantly feel vulnerable and fragile within these practices, experimentations and laboratories of everyday life. This new becoming's habits are produced from either individual or collective bodies operated as counter – effects

¹ Peter Pál Pelbart, *Cartography of Exhaustion, Nihilism Inside Out*, Univocal/n-1 publications, 2013.

to the norm and/or forms of normalization, generating mirror effects in some cases. We operate and react with those sketched habits in our bodies, those normalized forms we bring out when there's conflict or when we have to manage interpersonal, collective and or individual problems. We specially react in a myriad of selfish, individualized ways, when exposed to different forms of power dynamics and relationships. Sometimes we react, tending to flee to the normative, to the institutional, to those places the family has taught you as safe, carrying a certain production of knowings, certain affects. Sad passions. Sad passions, those affects leads us toward disempowering routes, evasiveness, and synical mechanisms of being and relating to our families, our networks, our work... our vital projects. How to unblock these affects? Exit, move, contaminate, create, and compose a way out of the impasse of these specific forms of control over our bodies, our individual and collective capacities of taking back our lives, our worlds – without reproducing an evasive line of flight?



Fragments from Conversations on Leaving, Staying and Claiming Space

by Ninaha

Over the span of a couple months, these conversations between some of the members of Egzilis Collective took place over the internet while physically being in Kaunas and Vilnius (Lithuania), Ljubljana (Slovenia), Murcia and Barcelona (Spain), Zadar (Croatia), and Philadelphia (USA). Although the core group and activities take place in Kaunas, the geography of the people involved changes.

These conversations below are meant to address some of the issues of being grounded in a place, keeping ties and trying to organize in uncertain economic, political, as well as social and mental conditions.

3/23/2015
8:50:48 P.M.

DP — DŽEMPERIO POZA

DP First of all, from what L sent, you get a feeling that lots of people from Lithuania and Eastern Europe in general over-individualize displacement and permanent movement. When in reality, after thinking for some time that I do it myself as well because “I am such way” or “I don’t wanna live like my parents”, you come to conclusion that we are not moving for ourselves. Otherwise it would not be so massive, would not include hundreds of thousands of people moving out of Lithuania and Eastern Europe in general at the same historical moment, as if the floodgates had broken. There is no reason to de-radicalize the problem: what we might think of as a free choice could actually be a dictatorship of that choice, collectively supported by ourselves.

The refusal to “delocalize” would not necessarily be a return to conservative thinking where you live at your homestead on the countryside, little dog by the barn, tens of children and traditional Oedipal community. Rather, staying might be a radical action – of course, not compulsory for everyone – similar to a refusal “to want” or “to choose”. In other words, to want and to choose against the currents: there is nothing the status quo is more afraid of than desires gone astray. After all, it is also a matter of understanding one’s position as an Eastern

European: you're a loser if you stay and you're a loser if you move, so what do we have to lose? Achievers are sleeping with the enemy :))

Agamben, who is somewhat silly, gives us not such a bad tool – the four categories of: possibility, impossibility, contingency, necessity. All the time we are whining about impossibility and necessity ("no reason to stay here, we need to leave"), whereas the goal should be the opposite, possibility and contingency ("it is also possible to live in Kaunas, there is no need to leave it" – there is no need to stay or leave, both are possible). This, I think, is our goal :)

By creating kinds of stability this could happen. Not necessarily through radical space, although establishing a network of squats, social centres and what not would be amazing, but also by establishing and sustaining legal structures, such as legalized squatting or free education in a manner that they don't become a trap for us.

The program I suggest consists of one sentence, "So maybe for once let's do it this way, so we don't need to start all over again? Because otherwise it is basics upon basics".

Two sentences.

ME For me it was interesting to go over some Lithuanian [activist] realities by mapping out what, when, and how happened/happening in terms of organizing, starting the openings. It seems that displacement works in interesting ways. Migration of people also has triggered new initiatives locally. But maybe it is also necessary to think about this desire and options for 'returning home'.

DP Well, there neither is nor should be any necessity to 'return'.

ME Well, yes, but sometimes there is a desire. For me, quite frequently, whatever the reasons. But, so you're saying that if we make permanent places or free education, it is possible to stay. By starting from more tangible things, what are tools or things do you see?

DP I didn't say this so concretely. I see more tools. One of them would be horizontalization of skills and powers, so that there

would be, paradoxically, less of the 'activist' mentality in activism and life in general: no 'pushers' and no 'passives'. But this at the moment seems to be the most difficult task for us, for it requires stepping over so many internalised boundaries.

ME But staying and inventing these forms of horizontalization is a 'creative' thing, no? And always worth of attention. Otherwise, it is merely a question about the needs of teachers and workers/consumers

hyphen not necessary... it all fits

DP Very well worth the effort. Here I also wanted to talk about irony. I was reading Hocquenghem, he writes "always to be conscious of power relations and always being aware of them is in itself another oppressive power relation." :) So this irony, on which we sometimes operate is often an obstacle. You have a feeling that any new idea won't work, that bullshit is being spoken and you obstruct the path towards any change. For example, in terms of workshops, seeking horizontality, attracting new people. And this is especially seen in the older generation. They know everything, they've participated everywhere and always know that nothing will succeed. :) Balsas & Liepa's [see below] attitude is pretty good here – trying out radically new things and ways of acting. But maybe we're getting off topic too much?

ME Why? It's all related.

DP Cause we are talking about situatedness and displacement.

ME I think we need somehow to displace our thinking models, and run from activism, and throw out phobias that beyond the milieu of your few friends, the whole world is fucked and so on.

DP Yes. The last segment of this sentiment is especially annoying.

ME Wanna share something about your experiences in London and expectations and experiences after coming back to Kaunas?

DP Yes, I can. I don't know how it is in Barcelona, but in London not all is well; although I were there only for a few months, a bit more than half a year to put my two stays together. Basically, I wanted to come back, not only because

there was carefully calculated propaganda coming from Kaunas, but also because I felt completely displaced there. Maybe I didn't happen to be in right places, where things are not built on hot air, as it is in many places in the metropolis. I wanted to be back where the "real struggle" is :) After coming back, a couple months of energy and enthusiasm, and then you need some supplements.

ME I was asking Be Statuso a lot about this mythology or 'carefully calculated propaganda'. What do you think it does in terms of collective **italicize** moving forward? Is it some kind of self-deception or an important 'psychosocial function'?

DP I think there could be even more of that 'self-deception', it does have an important psychosocial function. But it should go parallel with courage and publicness. With what provided us with most joy. And most of these illusions/myths/whatever? Food Not Bombs, September 1st¹, all the public things. Also **Sp(i)auda**², when it is published, when people come to a squat or you go meet the neighbors and you find out that people are already organizing against Šapnagis³. So all these processes are going parallel – the more you leave your kitchen, the more myth and more energy is created. Some good thought came, but I will lose it soon.

ME You've lost it?

DP A little bit. About the real action as a source of energy. Something that you can touch when you do something physically, something you're concerned about.

1 September 1st is **italicize** of the new school year for all educational levels. Our collective organized a theatrical intervention on the main street of Kaunas, where Vytautas Magnus University was celebrating the beginning of semester, with a massive imitation concrete block – symbolizing the burden of student debt, and was handing out fliers in the form of Ryanair tickets, suggesting that after the completion of their degrees people will most likely become labor migrants somewhere in the Western Europe.

2 **Kauno Sp(i)auda** is a regular publication intended for mass distribution that gives expression to activities happening in Kaunas and more broadly, meant to provoke and create dialogue over topics such education, work, and the city. It is distributed freely in a printed and online formats.

3 Šapnagis is the owner of the Žalias Namas (Green House), which is squatted now, but is doomed to be torn down to erect high-rise apartment building. Neighbors started to organize against the plan and small scale cooperation is starting up between squatters and neighbors.

ME Yes, but in regards to publicity, certain caution might be needed. Maybe it is my paranoid machine, but looking at the dozens of public performances and protests in Vilnius over the years, the picture is quite sad if what it all comes down is masturbation in front of the computer screen looking at your own images on pop*italicize*te. I'm not saying that the situation is the same in Kaunas now, though.

DP Novelty is an important factor, but I'm not sure if it's not given more importance than necessary... Because now, internally and externally we might start feeling pressure "to always come up with some different". It doesn't seem to matter any more that there is a squat, that there is Sp(i)auda. Everything's there. In order. Sometimes, all these talks on transversality and machines and how contemporary political subjects are always 'on the run' overshadow what is, generally, labour of sustaining and entrenching that which works, that which brings joy.

ME And constantly thoughts are circling about what actions could be taken. It seems meaningful now to do it with the house, to deal with the neighbors, if there is something to deal with. It appears that it would be a step not only towards acceptance but perhaps towards some kind of new collective perception that more is possible.

DP It needs to be thought through and acted upon since the struggle is the knocking on the door itself. *import-ant* Constantly the same question and the same critique comes up. From different people from our environment, such as: "What is the real struggle, how to know, when you really do it, and when you do it for yourself?", "If we were not here, would anything be happening here at all?", "Without a material basis only nonsense comes out." It seems that most *import-ant* is to feel "meaning":) And not to feel lonely. Because just when we start feeling that way, we fall back on individual activities and 'I don't give a fuck' attitude.

BS — BE STATUSO

ME In some sense it's interesting, how are we looking at Kaunas, because it seems that there is a lot of little brother syndrome (in relation to Vilnius), which is changing now. What do you think Kaunas' problem is and why does it have such a reputation?

BS Now I'm trying to think how much this imagination that "things are happening in Kaunas" and repeating it to others, to people in Vilnius in particular, contributed to real doing and acting.

ME I think contributed significantly, no?

BS Yes, most likely. But also it is related to this sense of irony, which helps you to survive. In terms of the little brother syndrome, I don't really feel it in Kaunas. The only lack might be perceived is from the cultural consumption. Meaning that in Vilnius it is easier to consume galleries, many cultural events but sometimes it seems that Kaunas, because of its size and because there is less to consume, has lack of spaces where you would like to go and to be. And it creates groups of people, which start creating their own spaces. I'm thinking here about raves and other such things.

ME Yes, yes. But this impression that there is some kind of upswing - you think it's 'objective' or 'subjective' (putting aside this shallow categorization)?

BS Now I'm thinking that maybe this imagination about Kaunas potential is part of our myth creation. This myth allows us to be here and belief in this potential. There are also some objective things (first of all the squat, but also the expansion of the collective, sluggish but existing process of the KSP union⁴)

Subjective comes more from the relations with outside, when you reflect those relations. It happens when you talk with

object-ive or ob-jective

people directly, with people who are part of **interact-ions** live in Vilnius, for example. But it also happens via mailing list, in relation to those who are abroad. What do you think about this subjective dimension? How to define it?

ME I'm not sure. I'm thinking about this sense of potential, myth, daily practices, **interac-tions**, 'community'. I think there is something quite drastically different from usual face-book conversations and debates when people don't see each other and argue **col-lective** with one another or create small groups of position. But maybe to come back to this mailing list and people being away. I think there are some interesting examples from the **collec-tive** when it motivates somebody to come back, or keep in touch, and have this mutually beneficial function without being fully present at any given time in one place. And even if this relationship is fragile it still creates links of engagement, meaning, potential. No?

BS Yes, partially it localizes you. I think everyone who gets involved, does it because they have some hope for Kaunas. Or, to put it differently, believe in that myth. And then this belief creates certain kind of relationship amongst us, which is not based on leftist ideas alone. And I am quite impressed, that people being very far away or not having enough time to fully get engaged in the core group feel certain commitment. You can see it through the mutual fund.

On the other hand, I think those, who give themselves most into all these things, and probably those who are biggest believers in this myth (or maybe not myth), also always feel very insecure and afraid that suddenly everyone will leave and you will be left alone.

The ongoing joke is who will leave first and who will remain to the last. This fear, however, lately started to disappear for an objective reason – hope, that there will be permanent place to do things and to live, having means to survive, a long time to spend together and make stronger commitments to the collective. The myth played its role. It is not as necessary as before.

ME For me it is interesting and important how to arrange that people individually or in small groups can leave, but a certain kind of institution remains to which you can come back. How to create certain commitment that we can individually contribute to that institution, which becomes permanent, without feeling of guilt when we need to leave.

BS Yes, that would be important to me. But out of nothing you cannot create such structure – you need some kind of material base. In this case, the mutual fund is a first step, which contributes to the creation of such institution. Another thing is with the core group and the feeling that without you nothing will happen, at the same time certain willingness to 'sacrifice' and stay here. And then, that everyone will pity you, how you sacrificed yourself and stayed. Sometimes I feel this sense of leadership.

ME Do you have any ideas how to deal with it?
Be Statuso: Most important is to share tasks, information, skills and to look collectively so that this role is not permanently instituted. But it is not so simple, because clearly there are people with more or less time, and maybe more or less desire.

Yes, time is important of course, but there is a need to create schemes, where professionalization of activism is not created, but rather increasing self-organization and self-sustainability (it's that 'give up activism' critique). On the one hand, there are many illusions that dedicated vanguards will take care of us all. On the other hand, if the changes will be real, they will need massive engagement, even if largely differentiated according to various responsibilities of care people have and so on. But the methods of coordination needs to be discovered where more people can do more things together.

BS When I think about this sense of transience, what matters for me is more than the thought that others might be leaving.

It is things like that I'm still living with my mother (which I know I don't want to), economic circumstances, unfavorable conditions for not having to work or to study. Structurally, it would be possible to achieve, but now I'm thinking that this myth, which was part of this whole creation, might also be an obstacle, because it creates perception that everything needs to be here and now and also I have this fear not to miss out on anything important

Whereas structure – and also setting future possibilities and plans more clearly – would allow to reduce individual anxieties and continue things differently.

ME In my opinion, if you create a certain base, the moment of letting it go might not mean missing out, but rather something complementary, when we get involved in other things in other places, we may be bringing something back, 'grow' and become more complex etc. We need to take these things into account somehow and try to transgress binary the thinking of here OR somewhere there. This is why I think it is useful to think through these terms of displacement and situatedness in terms of Kaunas and our collective, thinking what kind of practices may be developed to address those issues. In some sense, not to get stuck on street interventions or internal methods of collective improvement, but to think about important knowledge productions in a situation which won't change any time soon (migration, mobility, etc) and which could allow to use it as a set of tools wherever you are.

BS Don't you think that you are moving towards knowledge production leaving outside some important practices?

ME No, I'm talking about knowledge production as a tool, which is created not by sitting on the sofa, but through practice, encountering problems. In some ways, if it appears that things are highly precarious but it is possible to do long-term things, we should somehow avoid the romantic vision that we find each other and

spend the rest of our days together in one place as one family. The knowledge about how to sustain organizational, social, political and emotional balance may be useful wherever we are and in whatever we do. For me it is interesting how through experimentation we create certain kind of basis to deal with reality. Practice and knowledge are not separate things. One more question that I find interesting to explore is about irony and how it is related to cynicism, which is a different thing, but often the boundaries are quite blurry. Cynicism appears to be abundant in 'radical' circles in Lithuania.

BS I think the fact that we are doing something and we are a collective (where you create certain structures and fight for them) is already a step away from cynicism. I think cynicism comes from the sense of powerlessness and attempts to hide this powerlessness. In our collective of course it exists. But I think in those areas where we feel most powerless, its different.

ME You think something like 'healthy' irony, if it may be called that, contributes to 'harmony' in the collective?

BS I don't know if it contributes to 'harmony' and whether it improves everything. But somehow it helps.

4/29/2015
8:14:00 P.M.

RC — RIOTCUP

ME So first of all a little bit about Kaunas. How about answering this question: 'It is also possible to live in Kaunas?⁵. Possible or impossible?'

⁵ 'It is also possible to live in Kaunas' was a social advertisement by Kaunas Municipality, that was received with controversy by the larger public and has ever since remained part of the folklore when referring to Kaunas in ironic ways.

RC Possible. If you know how. From my experience, Kaunas is really not boring when activities – and people who agree with it – appear. Who agree and takes part in it. Otherwise it is a desert.

ME Do you think these activities can be sustainable? Should it be a goal? Can there be some kind of continuous culture of activity, where people are not necessarily always the same?

RC I think one of the tasks should be making these activities sustainable and this is among the biggest of challenges. If 'culture of activity' appears that probably already means that it has become some kind of social practice and entered autonomous sphere, which signifies that there is no need of those who are pushers, because people know the ideas and they can continue when others retreat. At the moment it is definitely not the case.

ME Part of the collective anxiety, though maybe not directly articulated is this permanent moment of 'everyone will leave'... From one side, there is quite a bit of inner collective strengthening (conflict resolution etc), on the side there is a lack of development towards the outside, so much energy is directed to the inside, which is also fragile. Maybe all that is needed is time. About people from our collective leaving – I don't know if we are ahead or behind. Sometimes it seems that it is a new reality that we've got a chance to test out first. "We", meaning those who live in the peripheries nearest the centers. Globally and locally alike. Yes, maybe somebody will leave. But that is why there is a need to create open structures, where new people could easily take part. Which I am not sure is possible in terms of losing content. But I think we need to get used to instable lifestyles and to changing social networks (here I mean people) and to high level of mobility. In terms of a collective's inside/outside, I think

both are needed. Lately I've been thinking a lot about collectives/movements and how much they depend on personal relations among their members. On the one hand, it is important to always reflect and analyze them collectively. On the other hand, there is a negative side, when the inside centers on itself, the stronger the familiarity with each other becomes, the more the circle starts to close and it becomes harder for new people to join in without strong personal relations with at least someone in the collective. I would put these questions for now into a category of 'existential', because I don't really know the answer. But this new reality when there is no stability, are we victims in it or the agents? Does the Lithuanian context prove that people here are more willing to move? If you make here somehow how you want it then you don't really need to go anywhere?

RC I don't know, there are always pluses and minuses. We can be both, I guess. On one hand, the good hand of the state disappears, dehumanizing paternalism and numbing stability (25 years in front of assembly line and pension afterwards). On the other hand, instability may create exactly the same consequences for other reasons.

ME Kaunas has this reputation that is transient. People leave. There are large student populations, but after a few years they leave. There is migration out of country as the whole and out of the city of Kaunas in particular.

RC Maybe not to the same extent now, lots of people moved out already. But yes, emigration is one of the crucial aspects, especially since there is no immigration.

ME How to situate yourself and how to do it in the movement through network and continuity, as in your example now in Ljubljana. This might be the 'nice' kind of emigration. But as we all know, most of it is not pretty when you work in the fish factory in Norway or strawberry

fields in the UK. I think one of the potential practices we can work towards is making 'exchanges' based on our interests, where we go to places and people from those places spend more time here. Some circulation may be healthy and networks of international support. It happens somewhat but could be developed further.

RC Perhaps, but this need comes up for reasons that are not personal. Rather they are the personally felt consequences of larger process (migration and other politics). It is true that in Lithuania there isn't lack of stagnation and sometimes you simply need to run in order not to be psychologically crushed.

ME Exactly

On guilt...Very Catholic concept, but while talking to others it appears as a feature about leaving the place, when there is a commitment to be in place and try out continuity.

RC Yes, unfortunately, there is such a feeling. Very fucked up feeling. It seems that this is one of the aspects we need to be working on and find some kind of synthesis.

ME Because if your commitment is based on guilt, sooner or later it will end up in resentment. Related moment is the core group within our collective. Inevitably there appears internal habits, conversations, vocabulary, which become difficult to communicate. But commitment can still be done over distance and more experimentation is required to see how it can be done. Because this reality of displacement is not about to end.

RC Ok, it's not only guilt. For me, there is a certain enthusiasm to show support and try to participate. Guilt would disappear if I knew that there is sustainability, but at the moment everything is still so fragile. So it always seems that even when one person leaves it affects the whole collective and the collective's productivity.

Exactly, this reality won't stop any time soon. And any ways, it seems, that there will be more of this reality.

ME Irony is related to all this somehow, at least in our context. Irony is always close to me. I think good irony has more subversive potential when facts displayed in the cold manner. But yes, there is a thin line between understanding/misunderstanding, irony/cynicism.

5/14/2015
7:42:51 P.M.

L — LIEPA, B — BALSAS

ME What do you think about that phrase 'It is also possible to live in Kaunas.' And a few words about Kaunas stereotypes. Why the image is so unclear? And is it from inside or the outside? Or maybe its all old news? Stereotypes about the 'heart of Lithuania', conservatism, purity, etc...

L And the streets full of potholes.

Why it is like this, so far I cannot answer, but thinking about inside/outside, there is adoption of outside opinion, if not as a 'real' thing, at least the jokes about Kaunas. You hear that Kaunas, and even more so people in Kaunas, are this or that and finally, even if you disagree, it becomes part of the small talk that you take on.

In terms of old news, I would say that now is the new trend to say that things are HAPPENING in Kaunas.

B I don't remember the image from 'inside'. From outside it is dual. On the one hand, when you come back from Vilnius first of all you start to feel that at least in the center there are more tough guys, generally grey (color-wise, not in terms of values), crouching people. On the other hand, Vilnius' colors disguise emptiness. Lithuanian-ness is something that probably comes out more in Kaunas.

L When I was living in Kaunas I didn't feel less in center than in Vilnius. Vilnius never was something special and Kaunas something shitty. And now also I can't say that I feel very strong desire to live somewhere else, abroad, somewhere more global.

^B If I feel some attachment to specific places they definitely cannot be measured by the width of Kaunas, Vilnius, or even more so, Lithuania.

^L Here and there it is equally lonely if there are no people around whom you trust and can do something with enthusiasm. During the Karnival⁶ we've talked to someone who migrated to London and it didn't sound as if the squatting tradition and current squats, for example, create something more extraordinary than here. And she said that she really wants to start living here again, that she wants to get involved because here is a vibe, so to speak.

^B I also, lately, try to live according to this "Where, if not here? Who, if not you?..." discourse. In addition, I'm thinking of transferring my studies to Kaunas in the fall if I don't need to pay anything

^{ME} Let's talk a bit about mythology.

^B Is it a Greek mythology, Ricouer's mythology, Egzilis mythology?

^{ME} You choose.

^L What is there to talk about. When you don't see things in action only read letters, everything looks very nice and good. The negative side of it is that expectations coming from this imaginary community do not correspond with reality. At least this is what people in Kaunas say. But the image is that things are really happening in Kaunas, certainly exists.

^B I happily reproduce that mythology in Vilnius, taking it as an example that it is possible to do things and good things can come out of it. I know that when activities of the collective intensified, more problems appeared. But I can understand someone from the collective who says 'I feel shitty but now I am the happiest in my life'. In Vilnius it is easier to live comfortably. Kaunas, it seems to me, is not that comfortable and maybe it is its advantage. In Kaunas (and maybe it is a blunt statement) if you want to actualize something, you need to do it yourself. And if you not going to do it, you need to look for others who are doing it. I don't see any problem with

⁶ Kaunas Karnival was a weekend-long event in May 2015 which brought people from the ECE region engaged in squats and social centers for getting to know each other, workshops, discussions and parties.

creating mythology and exaggeration, because searching for people to act together in Vilnius for a year, there was no chance whatsoever to reach similar intensity as with Egzilis in Kaunas.

ME Can you tell a bit about your experiences being between Vilnius and Kaunas and about possibilities of being involved over distance.

L To be involved over distance is possible, but it is much more complicated and requires much effort. It is much harder to support activities in Kaunas as part of your everyday life: because you won't meet these people in the city, not going to go to their home, won't eat lunch together, won't see them at the university. Practically, when you want to feel this relation, you need to make a special effort, which automatically doesn't emerge from your daily life.

ME Can you say a few things about the importance of place?

B Space seems to be essential and struggle through space seems to me most solid one at the moment and then the crucial methodological/practical question for anarchism becomes how to acquire widely recognizable, widely adaptable and relatively dynamic forms of continuity. So space, it seems, materializes ideology and it is an institution in itself thus different space or differently practiced space foresees some kind of continuity and possibilities to produce and reproduce practices which are necessary or compatible with it. I don't know if I'm able to imagine continuity in any other way right now.

3/17/2015
7:39:51 P.M.

N — N

N So where would you like to begin and for what?

ME Well, there are few things for why, but mainly for the reasons of thinking through what does it mean to try this (mainly) locality-based collective when this locality is hard to get oneself attached to, for the most of us.

N Well, it's not easy for me to say too much on the state of collective as there's been a lot of developments since I left. Well let me try. For example, I wrote someone an email about the burnout workshop. The idea of having a burnout workshop is not a good omen for me. I think it's probably one of the most convoluted concepts of the activist milieu. It makes me think of organizing as an after school sport, the race you can get tired of and then the whole thing of dealing with personal life and having a meeting once a month to focus on these issues is funny to me. because it seems from my experience that the bread and butter stuff is what keeps real shit together in the first place

I brought it up with some people out here who have never been involved in radicalism and it just sounded really bizarre to them. Like how can you burnout? you have to keep on living I guess I'm just saying the important thing is having people that actually have your back and know how to deal with shit when shit gets very real

ME But part of this having people who can have your back is about having relationships.

N YES!

ME And some of the strength and stress in Kaunas is exactly about that. Feeling that you start having something more solid and that it can go away and decompose at any minute. And how to deal with this.

N Well it can't. not if its solid. there is certainly no easy resolutions of course but like say with my new comrade Kalid or Charlie who runs a Nigerian grocery next door, it's like they are pissed off and really angry about life here and are amazingly supportive and welcoming. I just met Kalid and he's really concerned about my well being and trying to teach me how to deal with the job. We don't have a method of revolutionary organizing but first of all the relation won't die because it's based on a practical dependency not to say we don't talk lots of shit about American imperialism in North Africa but it's grounded on him actually helping me out. These are the relations I'm interested in. And as I say with the New York radicals who started coming around, they have been in different

political groups in NY over many years. These groups often amount to little to nothing, recruiting MA students. They are aware of this and more connected than most with what is and is not going to work but they still have a disconnect in terms of what will motivate us to get organized in more disciplined way. this also takes time. I really don't care to be around self-proclaimed radicals. They get stuck in PC land, are not down and don't know how to deal with money. Absence of intuition. And then they come by, make a mess and I have to do clean up because they don't actually talk with people outside their circles often, e.g, with my comrade Egypt who is an amazingly perceptive Trinidadian Muslim, who does street photography. I introduced him to this New York guy and then New York guy decides that he has to declare his entire political agenda as though it's just a number to recruit for a political project then I had to restart relation with Egypt and it took a while for him to realize I was down. Now we go to park and he raps in Arabic and we talk about how the police and politicians are the crusaders, social autism of intellectuals – it's not their fault.

ME Ok, I see what you getting at, but you don't tell me much about all this thing in Kaunas.

N Well I really don't know so much right now.

ME I mean, on the one hand you value it somehow. This can be seen in your emails etc. But on the other it could be seen also just self-proclaimed radical group. I'm not interested in what's happening right now. I'm interested in your relationship and whether you think there is a way to keep it. Or is geography of where you are here and now is the only way.

N Well, I think it's a different situation out there a bit, a small bit, but also very similar to here. I very much keep this relationship and do consider Lithuania a home. I learned a lot from over there, it completely changed my relation with America and I probably wouldn't have been hanging out with the people I'm hanging out without having spent time. It's hard to do counter-factual histories though. :)

ME Ok, but for me some questions would be coming back to your burnout workshop

comment, which I feel you have some hostility towards, or at least scepticism. So on one hand, there is a collective attempt at something collective, on the other, there are individual relations that you have or we all have. It is a question of whether it is important to do some collectivity and maintain it. Otherwise, we can reduce to bread and butter and leave it to organic composition or decomposition.

^N I haven't seen effective political organization in my life; or when I have, it disappeared in the duration of moments. I also am discontent with what I have in many ways as life is not easy and there is a lot of pain or let's say pleasure too. I'm discontent with both.

I'm meeting with a black c [redacted] group in North Philly next week and [redacted] with a Latino militant group who's organizing laundromats in Harlem. Maybe I will see something there. What do I see so far in Kaunas collective? Well I haven't been happy with the mailing list because the only time people talk with me is as political member and it was giving me very much, it seemed very formal and at this point rather have more personal emails with people I miss and see the gritty moments.

I want to come back, why? (I'm the question person now). So it was really cool to hear about how Sp(i)auda was distributed in the schools but these kinda things take quite a lot of dedication. I remember the Greek guy out in Vilnius talking about handing out their magazine and they did that for a long time and kids started to get to know them after a while and they made contacts but this isn't the direction you're looking for on this discussion.

Back to me. for example, I've imported the Taškas⁷ style here with the house where people come by all the time and we make food as social space, this is a connection with the group that has impacted me.

^{ME} For me it seems that you are somewhat avoiding this question whether these not bread and butter directly related collectivities are

⁷ Taškas was an infoshop/social space in Vilnius in 2013–2014.

meaningful or not – and if they are, as in case of Kaunas, these questions of relationships, migration, etc are important. There are bigger political questions, and they are intertwined, but then the scepticism towards maintenance of collectivity for me sounds to lead to another direction.

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^N Hmmm okay. Well for example to have a house where I can go to there. To have people that can help me out. These are all very important and I don't take them for granted, especially having spent so much of my life in NY where you can really fall into the despair of having no one at times. So when we're talking about fragility of our collective I'm contrasting this with the fragility of collective forms in NY. In contrast Kaunas seems very together. I don't have much worry on that front. Now in terms of things changing or people going and coming these questions, well, I wouldn't say I have any grand expectations for what will happen and it seems more often than not to not to start the parade with banners that were going to six flags of America and getting tired with celebration before we begin journey. There are bread and butter issues that keep people together I'd say, I don't know **reproduc-ibility** easy to "evaluate" situation over there. Lots of activity and energy, something is turning people on. I can't name vices and virtues. But you say people are really concerned about the group dissolving or something?

^{ME} Yeah. I mean that's why these conversations seem to be relevant. Maybe so far they are not very elaborate. But there is this feeling in the air that people will go away, some are more active than others, etc. So in the end what it comes down to is whether it is a matter of particular composition of a group or creating certain means of 'institutional **reproduci-**
bility'. Also the question, when it is **geogra-**
phically dispersed whether it makes sense for people to be maintaining some kind of ties and how it may or may not help the things keep on going.

^N Well the group seems to parallel Kaunas well enough in terms of a disturbance of composition.

^{ME} As you know, there isn't much tradition of doing something together in this kind of more 'radical' tradition. So there are quite a few individual voices, but they never move into something that is at least symbolically materially based (like the mutual aid, or collective fund we've started). It starts to make a difference in terms of openings to do things more effectively.

^N Ah yes, like the mutual aid collective fund is great idea and it means if someone gets fired or whatever they will have the resources to rely on. Classic union set up of the old days and hence can be more militant so there you go.

^{ME} And for you personally, what role the existence of this collective or its proto-forms, helps you – or not – to feel at home, to develop things, or to have some space to work through things in LT context.

^N I mean it's certainly more attractive to come back with a collective there. I can't imagine if I had to go to Vilnius and it was the same scattered shit. I would have certainly had second thoughts on coming back to LT, that is for sure. Between the countryside and Kaunas it's quite good.

I'm Out the Door

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by Alan
W. Moore

It feels silly to say, but this morning I was driven from our apartment by Pepita, the aggressive cleaning lady who comes every Tuesday. She arrived this morning earlier than we agreed upon – she has been pushing the time earlier for a while now. And I was more foggy than usual, having lost sleep from nightmares. These concern my storage, the masses of stuff I have in New York City and Milwaukee. In the dream this stuff was for some reason all on display; people were picking through it, asking if they could buy things. “These are duplicates,” one man said. No they were not; each one was different, a female performance artist of the early ’80s. Well, why not sell them to me anyway? Meanwhile, his friend is putting things in his bag and walking out.

This was one in a more vivid set of regular nightmares about my storage of stuff from the old times, about the 2 or 300 boxes left over from times I can barely recall – downtown NYC in the 1970s and ’80s, the world of art and culture which now has some kind of historical interest, in a growing industry of the imaginary past compounded of collective institutional guilt and the curiosity of the young in a city that has systematically destroyed the grounds for creative production existent during those years. I have a lot of work to do now on two new books about the resistant world of European squatting. Now it’s the tedious work of editing. Pepita was so bustling, so complaining, so pushing on me this morning that I couldn’t stand it. I simply couldn’t stay in the place. I had to get out, even without a shower, only a spot of deodorant, and rush off to anywhere. I always feel weird in the Spanish public eye, so different from the U.S., especially in this fiercely bourgeois barrio of Madrid, this rich person’s neighborhood in a foreign country. The well-dressed old ladies with their 1950s hairstyles in the tea room I landed in, the gentlemen dressed like showroom dummies. Me dirty, uncombed, in my Portland grunge shirt which lays to hand, just to get the hell away from the house. I’d so much rather be living in Lavapiés, the barrio of the immigrants. All the cool people I know live there. Which is in itself a problem. But I am here, in my lover’s apartment in Salamanca barrio, among

the rich, an undisguised foreign hippie – or, as they say here, “an alternative type.”

I believe in physical causes rather than psychic. Those nightmares were surely due to a late night dinner of duck liver, an angry animal spirit reminding me of karmic burdens. But this morning I was beyond unfocussed – I was trembling with agitation as I sipped the tea. In a half hour I had a physiotherapy appointment for my failing knees...

I know that really, this is nothing. A momentary attack of bourgeois neurosis by a confirmed Luftmensch set back in his study of leftist minutiae. Try penury, joblessness, and eviction for a taste of real dislocation, or a refugee camp with jihadis on your ass. And, finally, I must admit, this dislocation was productive. Marc asked me for a text on dislocation, and here it is. As a real live expatriate, now nearly five years gone from any real U.S. engagements, I work this dislocation all the time. This tension of dissatisfaction, of never being at home, always a little off center, sitting on the edge of the chair or leaning it back, a little disgruntled (“it’s good, but I’ve had better”), is continual. Like the hatred of the quotidian, whatever its form, the craving for novelty, the delight in being startled, and engaging the weird which even as a child drove me into the world of art.

Do I miss North America? Yes. I sure don’t miss the dismal rounds of U.S. politics, nor the disinterest in my weird opinions and research no one ever cared about. I am nostalgic for the country, which is beautiful, and the linguasphere, which I enjoy and can move and play in easily. But now I really have nowhere to go back to. Places I have lived and loved in, even for decades, don’t need me. They aren’t home. I’m gone.

But it’s not bad. This dislocation, the work of a lifetime both given and chosen, has been very useful to me. It has become somehow the grounds of my being. With it, through it, I can produce. I can do things that I think matter, that contribute somehow, that can be part of a bigger change, a necessary wave of a different life. I feel located in history – historian is my chosen work, after all – in that my work could mean something in the future when I’m gone. It’s already in there, in the record.

I wrote most of this with a pen I bought at a newsstand.
I had fled the apartment without one. If I didn't have a pen and
paper, I'd really be dislocated.

Syncretic Space and Transversal Parties: Friday night with Calais Migrant Solidarity

by Claire
English

Calais Migrant Solidarity¹ is an activist collective established at the end of the Calais No Border protest camp in 2009. Some of the solidarity work it does could be considered charitable, and there are on-going arguments about how to negotiate our activism alongside our critiques of the big society and its model citizens. The list of activities currently being carried out include; free English classes, free basic legal advice (outlining options available for those that wish to make a claim in the UK and those that intend to live clandestinely), workshops running through the questions the UK Border Agency ask during the asylum application process, sleeping in front of the squats and encampments (the press calls these the 'jungles') to prevent immigration raids, the occasional temporary housing of injured people and minors, organising demonstrations against the mayor and other ministers when they meet in Calais, myth-busting leaflets about what the International Organisation of Migration (IOM) actually provides if you agree to return to your country of origin, and twice a year taking over the meal provision usually done by the charities when they have their 6 week break. The group is constantly revising what is 'too charitable' to be considered solidarity work which is a whole paper in itself, but I think that gives you a vague idea of the activities and ethos of the collective. I'm writing as an activist who has spent over a decade organising in campaigns against immigration controls in both Australia and the UK, and as a PhD student writing about the ways that activists negotiate questions of gender and race in migrant solidarity projects.

At one point during my visits to Calais, activists were sleeping and organising in a place called 'the office' which was also used as a place to hang out during the day with groups of migrants that didn't usually interact with each other whilst undertaking the activities listed above. During the day, the

1 Calais Migrant Solidarity is without doubt one of the most challenging and rewarding collectives I have ever had the privilege of being involved with. It's an on-going project that is fairly well established in terms of funding and activist footfall, more information can be found here: www.calaismigrantsolidarity.wordpress.com.

office was usually occupied by around 80 per cent migrant men (Afghans, Egyptians, Sudanese and Eritreans, though this varied) and 20 per cent European anarchists/activists, spending hours chatting, drinking sweet black tea and checking emails.

WE ARRIVED IN THE AFTERNOON...

A friend I'd made through feminist politics was keen to visit Calais with me, she was considering spending an extended amount of time doing solidarity work there and wanted to see what it was like. We arrived in Calais to the freezing blustery wind, I'd forgotten just how bitterly cold Calais is in the middle of winter. The wind lashing off the coast made the small, impoverished border town feel miserable, even more so than usual. With barely enough French to order a taxi (always a source of embarrassment for me, and yet I do not take an evening class...It's hard to take an evening class specifically so that you can better understand the bitter edges of the EU migration regime, my ignorance is a buffer I allow myself) we gave ourselves a slightly bewildered start to our trip at best.

It was going to be my last trip to Calais for probably a good deal of time, I was in the early days of pregnancy and staying in a hotel and was making the trip for specific reasons. I had two things I needed to work out, I wanted to give my friend a sense of project and finish my interview with a charity worker who had volunteered to give some context to my PhD research. The short timing of our trip made it hard to get a feel for some things happening in Calais. Mostly people from CMS were spending their days walking the streets looking for and opening squats, or in the office, which was the last rented space CMS had left that hadn't been closed down due to Health and Safety regulations, holding an 'improper licence' or some other arbitrary loophole.

We went to the food distribution first. The charities provide a free meal in the evenings. The meals contain barely enough calories to sustain a child let alone an adult, but the food is free and it is warm. As two new women sitting with

CMS activists, we got a lot of stares. It is seemingly partly interest and partly curiosity, 'Why do so many activist women come to Calais? To do what? To hang out with us at food distribution? What do they want?' says the look. The look is almost always silent and often unbreaking. It is usually followed by shouts of 'Hey, are you No Border?' (are you an activist?) or if you ignore them 'Hey, are you cop? Are you journalist?' and will keep going until you reply. What has been deemed the 'Calais stare' is something that is usually unthreatening, receiving it feels like being a stranger in someone else's space, and once you are known you don't get it anymore. It could be read as sleazy, and sometimes for some people it is, but usually not actively. If alcohol is involved (many migrants say that they never drank alcohol until they got to Calais, but now it can be a big part of being trapped and unable to cross) then it can be the beginning of someone getting in your space, especially if they don't speak enough English to communicate with you, if you don't look away fast enough then it might be interpreted that you want them to come over—kind of like being picked up in a nightclub. Again, it can be uncomfortable but rarely, if ever, aggressive. It's quite hard to explain. There is a lot about Calais in this stare, our attitudes towards it and what your relationship to individuals and the place itself is like after you have been around long enough that you don't really receive it anymore.

The other thing worth noting was that this trip took place in the aftermath of France legalising same-sex marriage. You could tell this, because all over Calais, but particularly in the area towards the port, near food distribution, there were activist stickers on every pole, in French, calling for Calaisians to stand against the change. There were pictures of stick figures (one man, one woman) and 'Say no to homo marriage' written on them, and another set with a picture of a baby's face that stated 'For me I need one mother and one father. No to gay parenting'. There was not an organisation listed, but they were in a particular style that I imagine is similar to other propaganda put out by the same people— a type of branding. They added to the sense that Calais is a pretty hostile place for Others— even those with a EU passport...

LATER, THERE WAS A PARTY...

On a Friday evening the office is opened to the public for a party. It is like any other party I have been to in that some people who claim they never drink are drinking quite a lot, and some people who always drink a lot are drinking a lot, and even those who do not drink are clutching one in their hand like a weapon drawn- alcohol is a strange symbol of togetherness. It clumsily announces itself as a solidarity party on a sign on the door, and as I have learned over time solidarity is uncomfortable, even or especially if it is working.

I am there in my usual discomfort, part activist and part researcher, my nervousness hovers behind my conversations with local families and migrants and the other militants. It is uncomfortable for me, because as a scholar activist each moment of my ethnographic work includes a series of important relations; how we as scholars relate to ourselves as activists, how we see ourselves in relation to other activists and the kinds of relationships we build' (Pulido in Hale, 2008:350). So I feel a pressure to be a good comrade, a good member of a good project. The front room of the office is warm, which is of vital importance, the frosty winter winds screeching across the freezing coastline has hurried us all inside together. The atmosphere is thick as usual, so much complexity in this space where we **attempt** to communicate in broken English, or by an appointed translator, making conversations either long and involved or short and of body language alone. The conversations are friendly as people talk about their favourite Egyptian food, why tea should always be served black and with lots of sugar, who wants a haircut, who wants to play football in the park tomorrow.

One of the local French families arrives, their housing estate is only a few minutes walk from the office, and they are here to see Mark. 'Where is Mark?' they want to know. Mark is an activist who is regularly in Calais, he is handsome and kind and committed, in a No Borders meeting last month we joked that he is either perfect or a police infiltrator. He had visited the local family's home to talk about the increased

is this necessary?

police presence in the area since the No Borders office opened and the family like him. Mark says members of the family have agreed to send a text message to the office phone if they notice the police are sitting in their vehicles around the corner as they occasionally do, taking photos and writing notes about the office attendees. In return we will try to warn them if we see the police first, that way they can avoid police threats against them for street drinking or playing loud music or smoking spliffs outside in the afternoon. Mark emerged from the kitchen (he was attempting to make a meal for everyone out of the expired canned goods in the kitchen, 'most of the cans do not have maggots in them' he reassured us all). He greeted each of the four the family members by name.

A Sudanese man, Samad, who has been in Calais a number of weeks and is well known to the Calais Migrant Solidarity activists (partly because he is sleeping with a French activist and stays in her bunk most nights) poured the family a drink and looked shy but slightly pleased when the father asks in French where his girlfriend is. I am introduced to the family as someone who has been coming to Calais for 'a long time', but we do not know any of the same people as the French people I usually stay with are involved in the New Anticapitalist Party and do not live on housing estates, and they seem to come to the office less these days. The older son gave me one of his beers and I cannot tell if perhaps he is flirting with me, but I do not mind. He is about 15 and looks tough, if I was a teenage girl at a disco I would dance the other way.

In truth, you could not call this a 'safe space', there is too much alcohol flowing and some people are seriously intoxicated, lots of people do not know each other very well, no one has attempted to discuss any 'rules of engagement' for the office but for me, this is a beautiful night. The office is a space that attempts to bring many worlds of Calais in to the same room, even just to talk about how cold it is.

Ruth Wilson Gilmore talks about the prisoner solidarity groups and spaces she organises in as a chance for marginalised people to become effective political actors by bringing together those that have seemingly irreconcilable interests and backgrounds. She uses the term *desakota*, a Malay word

origin-ally

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that means 'town-country' and refers to places that are hybrid (or syncretic is her preferred term as hybrid implies **originally** pure origins) and are neither urban nor rural. Gilmore's suggests the goal of this kind of thinking is to 'compare political, economic, territorial and ideological valences that distinguish, and might unite, disparate places shaped by external control or located outside particular development pathways' (Gilmore, 2008:35). In her work about prisons, these spaces are occupied by prisoners, prison abolitionists, family and friends of those in prison and the poor and **racialised** communities most affected by the social and environmental degradation associated with the construction of prisons. These diverse communities work together as a mix, 'composed of places linked through co-ordinated as well as apparently uncoordinated forces of habitation and change' (36). Within these **desakota** organising communities there is a 'respatialization of the social' so that communities previously united around race or ethnic categories form the basis for syncretising previously separate political movements, 'illuminating shared problems without by-passing particularity' (44). The concept was picked up by Robert Alvarez to discuss the political economy of bricks and mangoes across the US-Mexico border as a way to move away from state-centric accounts of the border, emphasizing instead the way that both mangoes and bricks are shaped and reconstituted by processes of movement (Alvarez 2012).

It is processes of movement that have brought these various transborder people together here in the office, but the stark reality of the haves and the have-nots rears its head at the end of the night. The poverty that envelopes so much of Calais, especially the impoverished area where the office is located and the abandoned factories by the port where the migrants sleep, makes the end of the party feel bitterly cold. The Calais Migrant Solidarity activists, and those who share a bed with them, eventually make their way to their bunk beds, and the French families roll back to their flats down the road. I wasn't awake long enough to say goodbye to the migrants, the only ones that had to brave the wind and the cold in order to sleep, separating in to ethnic groups again and returning to their designated jungles. A party is just a party,

displacement

but making a convivial place to chat, to reproduce ourselves, to think collectively, does more than initially appears – at least we hope.

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Making a Parallel Society Visible through Community Theatre

by Sara
Larsdotter
Hallqvist

OR: CONTEMPORARY
HISTORY WRITING ABOUT
A PARALLEL SOCIETY
AND POSSIBLE WAYS
OF RESISTANCE –
GIVING UNDOCUMENTED
MIGRANTS VOICE AND
VISIBILITY THROUGH
COMMUNITY THEATRE

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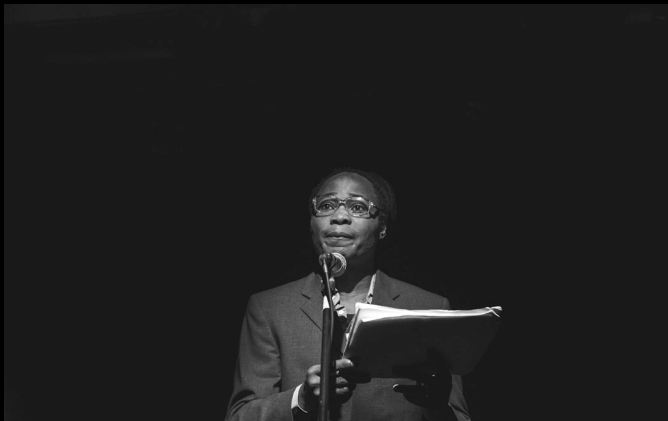
I applied for asylum when I came here, and my demand was rejected. "Ok", they said, "now you have to go back to your country." And they told me to come in and sign some documents. But I said no. I am not going back to Africa, unless you have listened to my problems. If you don't listen to me, I am not going. "Ok", they said, then we give your name

to the police". And they did. The police arrested me, and sent me to the detention center in Åstorp. Åstorp detention center. That is where I spent 10 months. And then they deported me to Africa. They didn't say anything, they just came. "Today, we will make you leave Sweden." I said ok, but I want to see the documents first. They said "no". They put handcuffs on my hands, on my legs, on my stomach. Yeah, they have something like this, they put it on the stomach. But they didn't show me the documents. We took a private jet, in Malmö airport, me and six police officers. Just me and six polices to Africa, in a jet. And we went to Africa, and we came back to Malmö again. Yeah. Because the country they sent me to, it's not my country. I'm not from that country. So when we arrived there, the country didn't accept me. And the police officers took me back to Malmö again.



You have to always make it clear in your mind – this is not your country. Like me – this is not my country. This is their Sweden, their country. This is their Sweden, their country, and

the country is ruled by the police. The police have the rights to do anything. They are always right. So if you want to live here, just go by their rules. Do what they want, just follow them. Don't talk to them, they are not going to listen to you. This is their system. This is their country. This is their law. And their law says they have to kick you out.



You get on the bus and you sit down. People see you are black. They see the seat is free, but no one will come and sit beside you. The seat is there. There are lots of people on the bus. The seat is there, free, they can see it. But nobody... they prefer to stand. And me... I don't care. If you like to sit, you sit, if you don't like to sit because I'm black... then stand! It is your own problem. If you sit down, do you think I will do something to you? Do you think I want to talk to you? If you prefer to stand, rather than sit beside me, it's your own problem. That's the way I see it.



I changed my address like twelve times during the year I was here. Because when you live in an apartment or a flat, and you live without papers, they can ask you to leave any time they want. This is really bad. I was living with people that didn't know that I was living without papers; I didn't tell them. Mostly I don't tell people, because you cannot trust them. And when they realized I lived without papers, they asked me to leave, because they were afraid... they thought I would put them in danger. For some time, I was without a house. I was really heartbroken. Then I found a new place to live, a room in an apartment. With some really nice people. They made me feel good, and welcome. I was so surprised that they let me live with them, without knowing me. And they gave me the keys to their house! I didn't feel I was welcome to Sweden before, but after that I was really much more... like... I mean I feel better to be here, in Sweden. Before I couldn't trust anyone. But the love I got from them... I just try to trust people again. And that was a really positive thing that happened to me, and that changed me. That key they gave to me, maybe they have forgotten, maybe it was something very small to them. But to me, it was like they gave me the keys of heaven.



I think there are some (police) who want to change, and who doesn't feel really good about this. I heard from one of my friends when they arrested him, that one of them told his colleagues to stay calm, and act normal. So there are persons

who doesn't want to do it in this way, but they are pushed to do it. By their chiefs. By the power.



When the police came... I remember it was Saturday. And they told me that they just wanted to talk with me. "We want to... just have a conversation with you in the police station." I said ok, and got in the car. But when we went, I could see it was not the way to the police station, it was out of the city. I asked one police "what is happening?" He told me: "We changed our mind, now we will go to Åstorp detention center". And they put me in detention for 8 months.

(pause)

I still get nervous a little bit, when I am talking about Åstorp, because it was very... dark days. Many people maybe they don't know about this, especially Swedish people. They think it's like a hotel for foreign people. But it is a prison. A prison for people who have committed no crime.

Me, I don't fear them. After what I have gone through... I don't fear anything. Are you police? No, no, no, I don't fear you. Because you are a human being, like me. You cannot destroy me. If you beat me...ok, we're in Sweden, it's your country, so maybe you can beat me here. But if you come with me to Africa, I will also make sure that you won't come back! Because of the treatment you have given me here, in Malmö, in Sweden.



The texts above are excerpts from the script of the theater production *The Malmö Code*, An introduction to the parallel Society which had its premiere in Malmö November 2014.

The script consists of texts from interviews and survey responses given by Border Police, Social Services, other citizens who interact with undocumented migrants through work or commitment, as well as interviews with people with present or former experience of living undocumented. All witnesses live and/or work in Malmö. The material was processed and put together to a script by the playwright and dramaturge Cecilia Nkolina. I was part of staging the production as a Director. Together with an ensemble of fourteen people, (one actress, one musician, one producer and eleven people with the experience of living undocumented) voice and body is given to these testimonies during a 100 minute long performance.

This is the second performance made by Theatre InterAkt together with and about the situation of undocumented migrants in Sweden.

Between 2010 and 2012 Theatre InterAkt was asked by the asylums and No Borders movement in Malmö to take part in a project of making a musical. The theme of the musical – the politics of migration and the situation of undocumented migrants in Europe and Sweden. The playwrights, actors and musicians of the musical, activists in the asylum- rights and No Borders movement, some living undocumented at the time. The result, a performance that was invited to play on the National Stage in Stockholm's National Theatre.

The fact that the musical aroused many requests from people interested to take part in theatre projects on this topic, through testimonies/interviews, writings and through acting, led us to continue, to go deeper. In the No Border Musical Project, the witnesses came from those with the experiences of living as undocumented and/or being an activist in the asylum-rights/No Border movement. In The Malmö Code many more voices are heard. At the same time the focus is very local. And our local perspective continues when we, during 2015, pass on more theatrical tools as a motor for social change within a community theatre that was started by a group of young undocumented and ex-undocumented migrants together with Theatre InterAkt. Three performances will take place in different locations in Malmö from February to September 2015.

Due to confidentiality, we can only publish the materials that we received approval for from participants to share outside the theater's room. We have no such approval from the Police nor the Social Service; but from 3 people with the experience of living undocumented in Sweden have chosen to share their material (processed by the dramaturge) for this publication.

presented by Sara Larsdotter
– Director – Theatre InterAkt

freedom of movement

BEING NOWHERE

TRAVECERE
RAVENUS
RAULPGEN
PENTEN

"FREEDOM"
MEANS
freedom
Mama

NO
BORDERS

MIGRATION RIGHTS

SOCIAL EXPERIMENT

ART-MAKING
TOGETHER
TOGETHER
TOGETHER

ART-MAKING

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ANONYMOUS SPACES

SUSTAINABILITY

OF OUR AV TERRITORIES

KNOWLEDGE

KNOWLEDGE
KNOWLEDGE
KNOWLEDGE

LABOR ORGANIZING

KNOWLEDGE

PRECARITY

BASIC INCOME
ACTIVIST
IN EUROPE

ONLINE
WORKERS'
RIGHTS

EURO
MAY DAY

CARE
COMMISSION

UNEMPLOYMENT
IN EUROPE

PROTEST
OLIVE
MADRID

