

Plastic Love

a
schizoanalytical
approach
to
material-discursive
politics
via
collective
care



Table of Contents

Politics

Relevance

Of the Enlightened Condition and
Determinate Grammatization

Theoretical Framework

Desire, Value, Care

A Schizoanalytical Approach

Methodology, Expected Outcome

Architecture of Political Enunciation

Design

[...]

We see your hands and legs are tied
In clearest breach of by-law five
And left here in this little room
In clearest breach of by-law two
And though you know that we take pains
The process of the law remains
All technicalities aside
You'll see our hands are also tied

[...]

So put your finger to the names
The only cure for fear is blame
In doing so, you're doing good
There's many called who never would
Who stuck by what they thought was right
Who disappeared by dark of night
Who disappeared into the breeze
Left no family left to grieve
There, now see, that wasn't bad
As you leave, you can be glad
That you have done your little part
To fight the monsters in the dark
But have a care, the night is cold
Take a torch before you go
And we will keep you safe and warm
That's what the torch committee is for

The Torch Committee
Song by Josh Ritter¹

Politics

In his 2019 song *Torch Committee*, American song writer Josh Ritter alludes to a corrupt, authoritarian mechanism in seemingly representative politics. The (manufactured) consent² that the titular council justifies its supremacy with is turned against the individual in a perfidious manipulation of the individual's ethical compass. The emotional mechanisms that the committee appropriates to achieve its goals are simple: fear and isolation.

Ritter points out a substantial problem in our current organisation of togetherness on our journey through the struggle for survival as a species embedded in the “multispecies muddle” that is life:³ Politics, in the representative manner we do it today, is in an identity crisis. Objectivity and the just servitude to ‘*the people*’ appear to be a pretence and, in contrary, our systems seem more pervaded with power-asymmetries, greed for surplus-value-extraction and violence than ever. We systematically avoid taking responsibility for our anthropocentric, neo-colonial, and local crimes, inert to overcome political and social norms that are restrictive – if not harmful – whilst constantly assuring each other of our intelligence and supremacy in a celebration of *techno-fixes* and *woke-culture*. There is no doubt that, to effectively tackle the global challenges we are facing – from social stratification, over the homogenization of values⁴ up to the collapse of our ecosphere – truly collective efforts are necessary, which brings us to question: How might we do politics?

Politics is understood here, as the process of *organising individuals* and their inter-relations, as well as the *formulation and confrontation* of problems that are overcome *not by oneself*.

Fig. 1: Process of Louis XIV, the de facto invention of western representative politics.



P.F.J. Robert, political theorist and part of the trialling jury (National Convention) later-on refers to the “[im]bacity of] those who wish to adapt all the principles of democratic government to a representative government”.

The Problem of Consensus and the Need for Dissent

Representative Politics are not only a-representative and inequitable, but in a constant craving for a specific type of inertia, namely, consensus. Theoretically, the quasi-absence of productive differences in politics pushes processes into a type of limbo of minimal resonance, practically, it results in the artificial harmonization of individual demands and needs – desires – to find an “agreeable middle” (*Fig. 2*). As the latter becomes the spectrum of political discourse (exceeding the spectrum on either side is labelled “extreme”), fuelling economy and lobbying across the global capitalist process (*Fig. 3*), substantial change is inhibited.⁵ It appears that the current political apparatus is set to alleviate its subjects from the responsibility for participation and therefore from the response-ability (the ability to respond) of dissent.⁶

Meanwhile, the echo-chamber that is social media attunes the political stances of individuals in a moment of spontaneous synchronization, stratifying social congregations into less and less permeable groups of artificially interiorised consensus. The feeling of collectivity and safety (as collectivity is what ensures the human “supremacy” and survival as a social animal), however, is of a formal nature: The desire for consent due to its effective harmony does not depend on its content or “representative” character, whilst dissensus is understood as an act of (self)isolation.

What is urgently needed is a fundamental modulation of our collective understanding of power, value, and political enunciation to allow for more diverse evaluation of collective decision making, as to allow for individual and collective fabulation on resilient modes of desiring-social-production. We need to find modes of living that acknowledge dissent as a way of making politics. This requires for us the change the image of politics and that of our built environment, the latter of which is producer and product of politics.

Fig 2: Selectivity and abstraction due to consensus

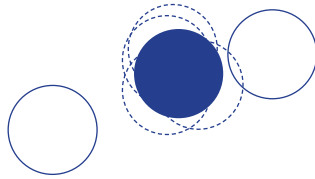


Fig 3: Absorption of external values and resources into the capitalist process

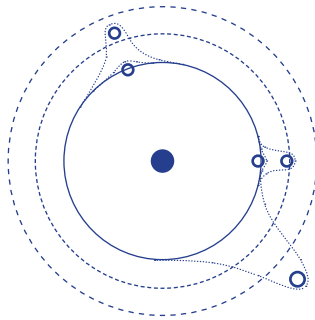
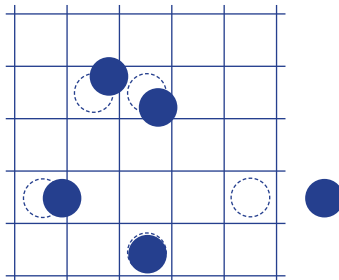


Fig 4: Gridding of subjects due to determinate grammatization



Of the Enlightened Condition and Determinate Grammatization

As Yuk Hui posits in his 2019 article *What Begins after the End of the Enlightenment*, the “Enlightenment was not simply an intellectual movement promoting reason and rationality, but also a fundamentally political movement. Navigational and military technology allowed European powers to colonize the world, leading to what we now call globalization”.⁷ The social nature of this political movement is often underestimated. The prior crusade of the exchange-value-system {e} in the West, that was forcibly imposed on other cultures during colonialisation, over-coded alternate valuations in the affected colonies such as gift economies (see *Fig. 5*). The commensurability-compulsion {f(e)}, the tail-end of the anthropocentric conquest of life (or at least the perceived taming of it via binary descriptions and the reasoning of reason), proliferated. The compatible technologies of the time – shipping and food preservation – allowed for the a rapid expansion of the capitalist process and the subsequent global(normal)isation of values, technologies, time perception, and knowledges.

What becomes striking about Hui’s analysis is that, not capital, but the underlying exchangeability of incommensurable values is both first move and end-game of the project. The now exportable technologies and norms can today be felt as the continuation of the monotecnological Enlightenment, the globalized whole with all its neo-colonial connotations, and an entropic

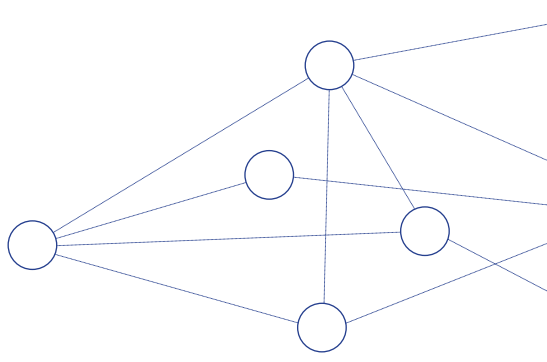
“global axis of [space]time”.⁸ When, in the following pages, I am speaking about the *Enlightened condition*, it is this: The proliferation and reproduction of the commensurability-compulsion that, for reasons of efficiency (cheap labour, cheap nature) necessitates the homogenization of values and the processual gridding of life into digital (binary) distinctions.

As the technological phyla of communication and entertainment evolved into social media, streaming services, and anonymous online forums, the gridding of values now extends up unto the calculation and abstraction of our libidinal investments into marketing and consumption functions,⁹ a process that over the course of this paper will be understood as *determinate grammatization* (Fig. 4). As the capitalist process is taking charge of our desiring complexes in a loop of surplus oriented grammatization, we are facing a new level of alienation and proletarianization on a global scale: We are used to not owning land, we are used to not owning material production, and now we have lost ownership over what arguably is our most intimate capacity: our libidinal investment.¹⁰ The determination of our libidinal investment towards a globalised, homogeneous, commodifiable resource, urges us to find new, countering practices to allow for true dissensus and the implementation of politics that assist in collective trans-individuation. This thesis seeks to investigate processes of collectivization, as a fundamentally situated (countering global(normal)isation), perpetually maintained and emergent (countering the enlightened image of finality and definability) and potentially just (countering (a-)representative modes of politics) practice to learn to become response-able.¹¹ It sets out to problematize the human political-libidinal complex via collective care.

For the future research on this, three core terms become relevant: Desire, Value, and Care.



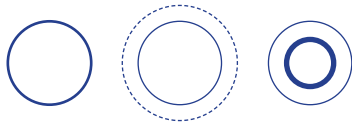
Fig. 5: Masawa canoe as part of traditional *gifi* economy (*kula*).



Desire

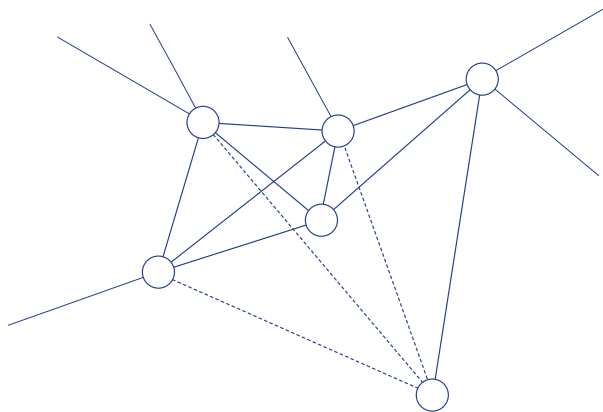
Deleuze describes desire as the excess of libidinal energy (\neq lack of X).¹² It defines the intentions of the individual and therefore informs the social. It is a “more basic political concept than power”.¹³ It is the driving force for becoming, but also organizes systems of repression, as multiple desiring individuals confront each other.¹⁴

The plane of transmission is the milieu, that we, as architects, can modify.



Value

We need to “uncouple value from quantification”¹⁵ and return to a use-value distinction, to refrain from gridding systems of life into binary categories of resources that can be exhausted. Use value {u} is inherently situated, countering the global(normal) ization that is the product of the Enlightened Condition. It is actualised via action-perception.



Care

Care is an axiological attentiveness to fragility¹⁶ and an attunement to one's surroundings. It is closely related to practices of maintenance and is product and producer of sense-ability. Care requires perpetual engagement and high investment for low immediate gratification. It is itself a revaluation of currently un(der)valued labour and is practiced in relation to our material environments.

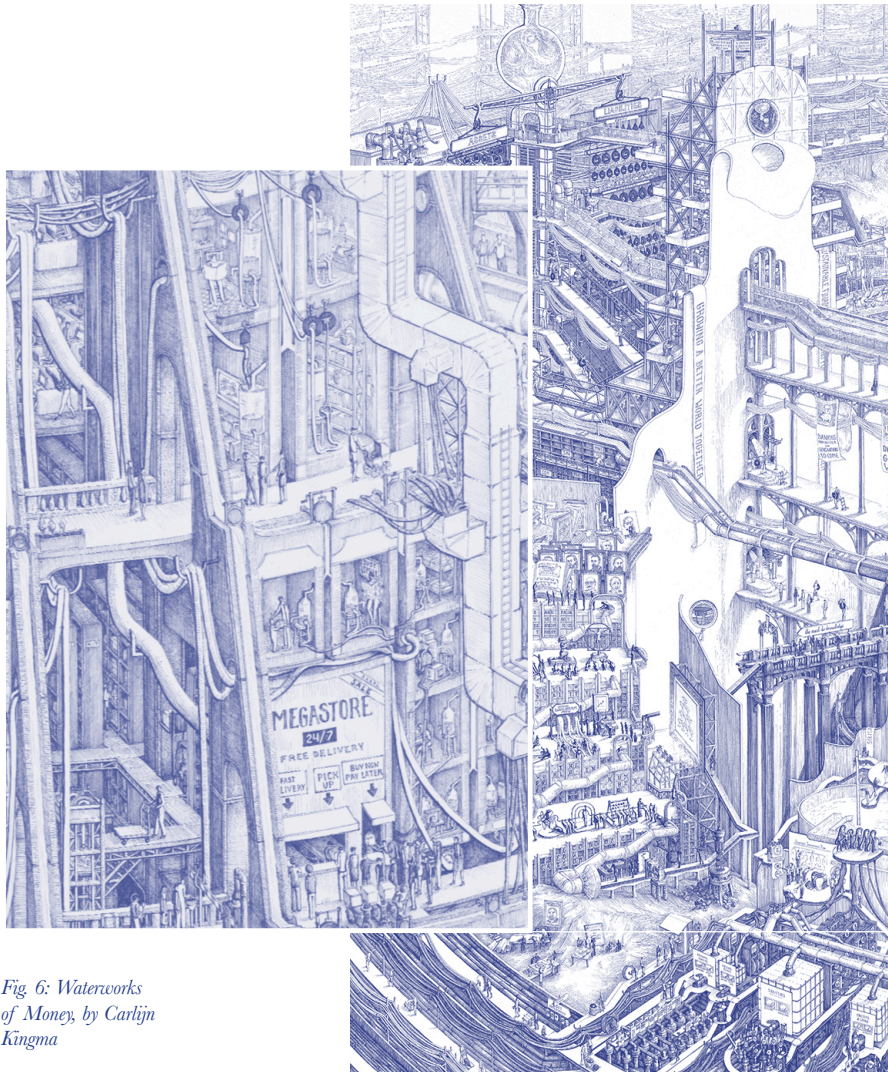


Fig. 6: Waterworks of Money, by Carlijn Kingma



THE WORKERS OF POLICE
FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK
AND COUNTY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

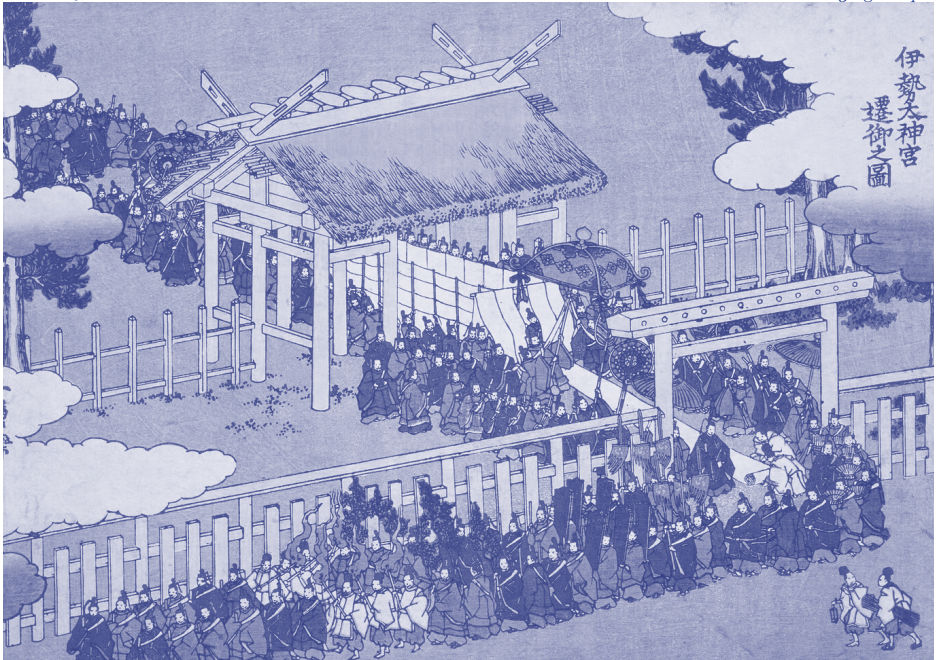


*Fig 7: Ryūfuku-ji
Temple as a patchwork
of mended timber*



Fig. 8 (up): Annual maintenance of clay residencies, Burkina Faso

Fig. 9 (down): Celebratory relocation of Ise Jingu temple



As a research question I would therefore put forward the following:

How can processes of collectivization – as a spatial and social practice of care that intervenes with the (preindividual) milieu – liberate desire from the determinate grammatization by the capitalist process to proliferate a response-able dissensus (schism) and assist trans-individuation as politics?

Processes of collectivization as a mode of desiring production potentially opens up discourses and productions of production, creating subjectivities that are aware of the resilient metastability and hence become response-able.

Included in this are sub-questions such as:

If the confrontation with the socius is the immanent throttle of desire, which other, modifiable constraints for desiring production, systemic and material, are in place?

Which practices and processes can invert the dominant value-politics-hegemony and of which qualities do these practices need to be to foster emerging relationality and de-isolate desiring?

What (architectural) restrictions are productive for the engagement of the individual?

How do we need to frame our understanding of care and maintenance, considering the multiplicity of individual perspectives?

What is the role of the architect, if architecture is understood as a individuating framework for trans-individuating?

As a structuring for a three-partite research I intend to recompose them as such:

1: How do current systems, technologies and valuations occupy/manipulate our desires?

2: Which practices and processes can foster active subjectivity and a politics of revaluation?

3: How might individuals participate in politics (collective problem formulation and over-coming) in a framework of care?

A Schizoanalytical Approach

Discovered by Deleuze and Guattari over the course of their collaboration on the two volumes on Capitalism and Schizophrenia (*Anti-Oedipus*, 1972; *A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980), the following research will be conducted according to the methodological framework of *Schizoanalysis*.¹⁷ The approach aims to counter Freudian psychoanalysis in its rigidity and essentialism. Deleuze and Guattari implicitly render the psychoanalytical approach as conceptually instable, as it is fundamentally dogmatic and inert to significant change to the poles of the oedipal relations. It is thus not flexibly applicable and operating within a cartesian (“enlightened”) ontology.

Schizoanalysis, according to the authors, aims to take the schizophrenic, the sick, out of its repressive milieu: In and of itself the Schizophrenic is not condemned, but rather understood as a potential. The Schizophrenic, as Deleuze and Guattari formulate, has the “the ability to constantly break free from the dominant emotional controls”.¹⁸ As a condition the schizoid “not-making-sense”, as opposed to the paranoid “making-too-much-sense”, allows for the recording of paradox within the socio-political framework and semiotic inconsistencies (which fittingly aligns with the ambitions of this project). The Schizophrenic becomes “sick”, as soon as they are confronted with oppressive apparatuses, such as psychotherapeutic clinics, and withdraw into a catatonic state.

As a machinic – rather than structural – process, desiring-production and social-production become inextricably linked and “the same thing”.¹⁹ The schisms, in the case of an analysis of the synapses of individual and collective, are the differences and multiplicities of desiring subjects themselves. Rather than focusing on a specific marginalized group, the research will try to uncover the multiple ways in which various individuals are confronted with determinate grammatization towards {e} in their daily life, in order to find angles to unhinge desiring-production and -transmission (and with-it political enunciation) under {u}.

It is an anti-methodological approach of unlearning a qualitative-quantitative binary – among others – that governs most research and representational methods. Instead, it acknowledges the irrationality of rationality (and vice versa) as a potential for reframing our value ethics.

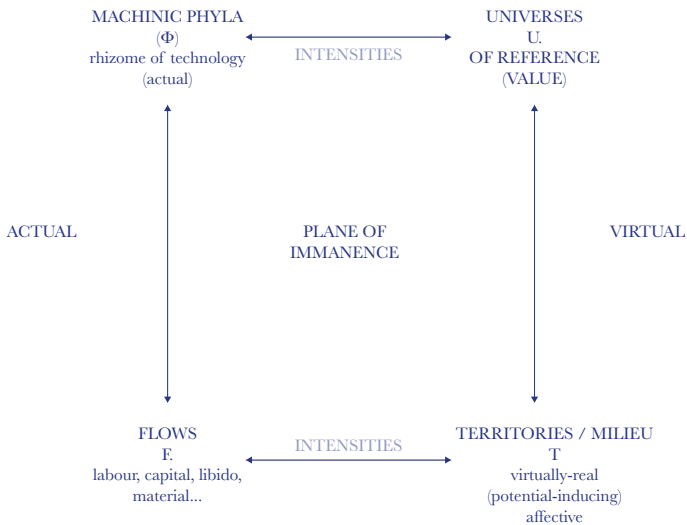


Fig. 10: Plane of Immanence (field of potential), based on Guattari’s Plane of Immanence in “Schizoanalytic Cartographies”

The research method will incorporate a three-fold analysis, revolving around the milieu as transmitter and scenography for the schizoid coming together of individuals and the collective.

1) An investigation of the schizophrenization (repression, made-sick) society in the form of counter-mapping the restriction/occupation of environments by a regime of exchange value (A; *Fig. 6*) via:

- Φ) Strands of technology (transport, communication...)
- U) Value systems (plus the apparatuses they emerge from, such as education, the “proliferated presuppositions”)
- T) Territories (the embedding of specific individuals in specific milieus)
- F) Flows (of resources, people, information),

as defined by Guattari in his later work on *Schizoanalytic Cartography* (*Fig. 10*).²⁰

2) Further, I intend to build an index (*Fig. 7-9*) of practices of care and valuation via material experiments (models) and photography/collaging.

3) A series of situated figurative encounters, as a multi-threaded narration of individual routines²¹ will assist in the synthesis of the design brief and compliment the index of care with an insight into subjective affordances.

The outcome of this research will provide me with multi-threaded and anti-methodological recordings of the experience of values, taking on different perspectives in an attempt to maintain a schizophrenic attitude towards social production (politics). The collection of maps (1), patchworks (2,3), drawings (3) and models (B) will be presented in an exhibition to properly convey the scale and sense-ability this project is concerned with.

Ultimately, this research is not only conducted to substantiate my own design project. I hope to find a possible angle on the permutation of a social ontos via engaging with desiring differently and to explore the potential of architecture in the mediation of the individual and the collective.

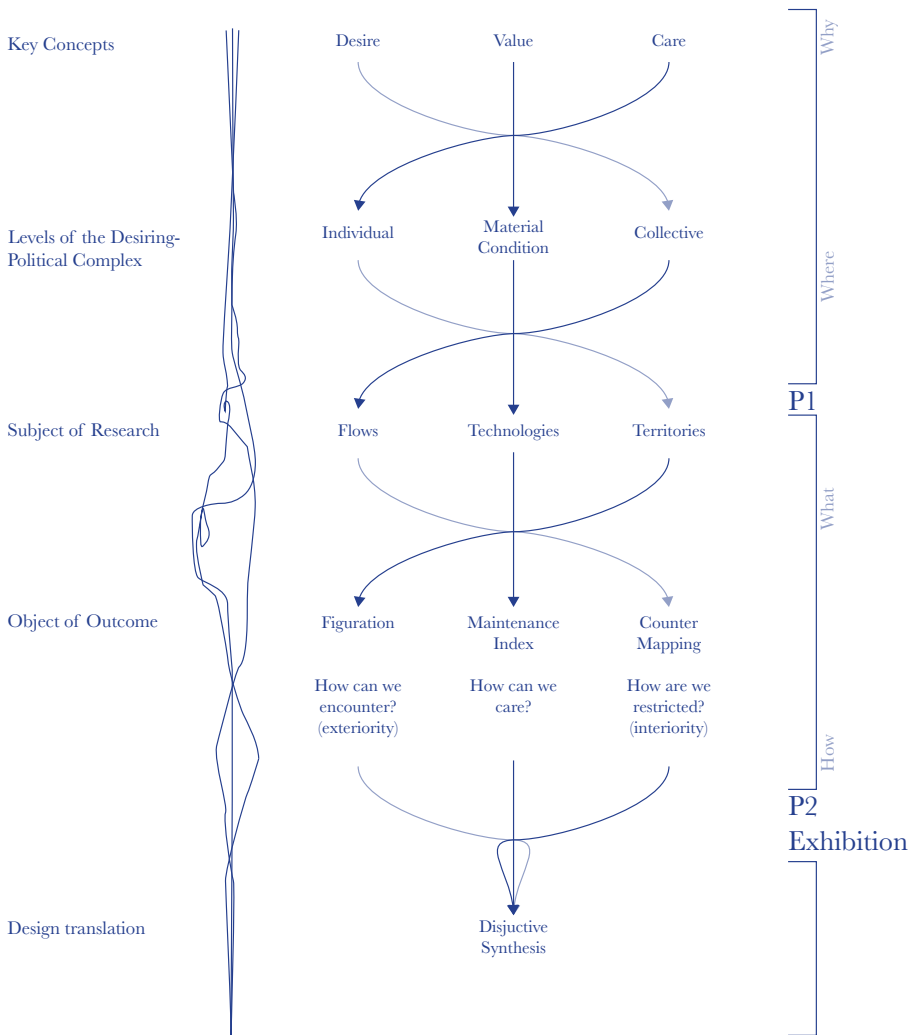


Fig. 11: Research Diagram

Architecture of Political Enunciation

I intend the architectural design to be a flexible, ever-changing framework that asks to be adapted and adopted. An architecture that is becoming, a system whose function is to be actively maintained alongside its affective relations. Questioning the common understanding of architecture (as an object) and the role of the architect (as the instructor), the project understands architecture as process and affordance. As a main functor in our milieu it has the potential to foster learning-from and learning-with each other, to build intentions and intuitions that allow for response-able becoming. The architecture problematizes the relation between the individual and the collective as both are producing the space simultaneously.

A war-machine (in the Deleuzian sense) evading the absorption into {e}, always, to an extent, unfinished, foreclosing fragile rigidity.²² Practices of care and maintenance force the individual to engage in (spatial) politics and occupy the potential that is immanent to our milieu.²³ Collectivizing response-abilities for political enunciation aims to spark engagement.

I see the design as something ephemeral, joyful and careful that is based on the shift to a use value orientation and our a collective practice of schizophrenic (and, and, and...) politics that is multithreaded and respectful of the desiring subjects that make it.

References

- 1 Josh Ritter, "Torch Committee," Track 5 on *Fever Breaks*, (Pytheas Recordings, 2019).
- 2 Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988).
- 3 Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 31.
- 4 Felix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies* (London: The Athlone Press, 2000) 29.
- 5 Georg Monbiot, „The new political story that could change everything,“ TED talk, recorded July 2019, Edingburgh, https://www.ted.com/talks/george_monbiot_the_new_political_story_that_could_change_everything.
- 6 Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 2.
- 7 Yuk Hui, "What Begins After the End of the Enlightenment?" *E-Flux* #96 (January 2019), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/96/245507/what-begins-after-the-end-of-the-enlightenment/>.
- 8 *ibid.*
- 9 Bernard Stiegler, *The Neganthropocene*, Ed. Daniel Joseph Ross, (London: Open Humanities Press, 2018), 34-50.
- 10 McKenzie Wark, *Capital Is Dead*, (London: New York: Verso, 2019).
- 11 Gerhard Bruyns, Stavros Kousoulas, and Heidi Sohn, „Commoning as Differentiated Publicness“ *Footprint* 9, no. 1 (Spring 2016): 3, doi.org/10.7480/footprint.9.1.
- 12 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*.
- 13 Daniel Smith, "Immanence and Desire,," 135.
- 14 Daniel Smith, "Immanence and Desire,," 135.
- 15 Brian Massumi, *99 Theses on the Revaluation of Value - A Postcapitalist Manifesto*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), 4.
- 16 Jérôme Denis, „Ecological Reparation: Ethnographies of Maintenance,“ interview with Maria Puig de la Bellacasa & Dimitris Papadopoulos, recorded November 2019, video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ebBsxOxu_LI&ab_channel=EcologicalReparation.
- 17 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977).
- 18 *Ibid*, 75.
- 19 Daniel Smith, "Immanence and Desire: Deleuze and the Political," *Stasis* No. 1 (Spring 2019): 129, <https://doi.org/10.33280/2310-3817-2019-7-1>
- 20 Felix Guattari, *Schizoanalytic Cartography*, transl. by Andrew Goffey, (London: New York: 2013): 17-45.
- 21 Rosi Braidotti, „A theoretical framework for the critical posthumanities,“ *Theory, Culture & Society*, 36(6), 31–61, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276418771486>.
- 22 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus - Capitalism and Schizophrenia Pt. II*, transl. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: London: University of Minnesota Press, 1987) 230.
- 23 Brian Massumi, „Histories of Violence: Affect, Power, and Violence - The Political is not Personal“, interview in *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, November 2017, <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/histories-of-violence-affect-power-violence-the-political-is-not-personal/>.