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theory & politics in organization

Something More on Research Militancy: Footnotes on Procedures and (In)Decisions

Colectivo Situaciones

translated by Sebastian Touza and Nate Holdren

I

This article tells a real story. That story – like so many other stories these days – begins with a message, an email. It is signed by a friend from Madrid. She is from the group *Precarias a la Deriva*.[1] The message is addressed to Colectivo Situaciones. She asks us for an article, neither too short nor too long, about the experience of the collective in Argentina. More specifically in Buenos Aires, although not just there. In particular – she tells us – the idea is that we say 'something more' about the figure of the *militant researcher*, the name we give, in the collective, to our activities. Something 'more' not so much about the concept, but about the practice. "About the context, about difficulties, knowledges, procedures, notions," our friend says. "Because – she adds – the piece *On Method*[2] leaves many doubts about concrete questions regarding the workshops."

Our friend suggested that we further elaborate on four fundamental questions: 'Decision,' 'concepts,' 'procedures,' and 'knowledges' ('know-hows'). To begin the exchange, we were told about how each of these questions can narrate a dimension of an experience/experiment: she referred to that of the Precarias a la Deriva.

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1   Precarias a la Deriva, whose name translates as Precarious Women Adrift, are a collective who undertake militant research on precarious and feminine labor, primarily in Madrid. More information on and by the Precarias can be found at [http://www.sindominio.net/karakola/precarias]. This article originally appeared in a Spanish language collection dedicated to militant research, entitled *Nociones Comunes,* edited by Marta Malo of Precarias a la Deriva. *Nociones Comunes* is available at [http://www.nodo50.org/ts/editorial/librospdf/nociones_comunes.pdf] – Tr.

2   This text is the prologue of the book, Colectivo Situaciones and the Movement of Unemployed Workers (MTD) of Solano (2002) *Hipótesis 891. Más allá de los piquetes*. Buenos Aires: De mano en mano.

We tried to understand. 'Decision': refers to the decision(s) we made in order to produce and develop *research militancy*. A story not so much of the Colectivo Situaciones as of the way in which we developed the research militancy. 'Concepts': to show a bit of our relation to the notions we use. Not so much explaining them (which would be very boring), but introducing a bit of their operation in concrete situations. 'Procedures,' namely, getting inside the material processes that configure the activity of research militancy as such. Finally, there are the 'know-hows,' which are referred to the infinite local knowledges that make possible the creation and development of the procedures.

To be sure, this task turned out to be – then and now – *titanic*. In fact, we were capable of confronting it, in a very partial way, only because our friend was willing to maintain a more or less regular correspondence with us on these issues.[3] As a result of this conversation, issues related to two of the four proposed items were laid down: 'decision' and 'procedures,' aspects to which we will give, here, central importance.

What follows, then, is an attempt to develop the context and the characterization of some facets of research militancy: not so much by doing a historico-political description of our circumstances, nor from a narration of the concrete experiences that we have carried out (both aspects are partially registered in our publications[4]), but rather from the modes in which such circumstances (contexts, experiences) produced a trajectory.

II

The first problem we ran into when we started the correspondence (which refers to a fundamental issue of research militancy) was that of *communication*. And this is so in more than one sense.

First, there is the question of what does it mean to *communicate*. On one hand, of course, there is the fundamental, insurmountable impossibility of the nontransferable character of experience. We can tell 'this' and 'that.' We can even tell 'everything,' but there is always *something* that slips away. And, moreover, there are differing points of view. How to bring them all together? And even when this could be done, there is an intensity of what happens that can only be captured in full by 'being there,' physically present, subjectively involved.[5]

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3   The exchange took place during the last trimester of 2003 and, as we said, constitutes the basis for this text. In our experience, productive friendship turns out to be the greatest source of inspiration, with the bonus of giving us the greatest satisfactions.

4   Many of which can be found in our website [www.situaciones.org].

5   Faced with these deliberations, our friend poses questions: "How is it that you do not believe in communicating and publishing texts?" In order to separate ourselves from the alienating image of communication, in its ingenuous version as a message from one consciousness to another, we suppose that writing, implicit in a practice, in a living thought, is particularly moving for those who search. We experience publication more as a search for (producing-receiving) *resonances* than as a transmission of messages. The final goal of publication is, in our case, extending experimentation,

On the other hand, how to communicate *what we do* if not – precisely – by *doing*. That is, how to transmit a reflection (a word committed to an experience/experiment, to certain practices, to living thought) about reflection without making a meta-theory about ourselves?

Moreover, how to explain each singular operation, in all its precarity, without turning it, in the same exposition, into a technique (our friend shares this concern: "*Suffice it to think of all the Methods, with capital 'M,' and their disastrous consequences*")?

In the end, when we reject the word 'communication' we don't do so in the name of an *incommunicability* that would confirm the 'financial' dispersion of experience, but as an impeachment of the accompanying assumptions of the 'society of communication.' If the ideology of communication presupposes that "all that is communicable deserves to exist and all that deserves to exist is communicable," only because technologies provide the means to do it, what is cut out is, precisely, the affirmation of the experience (as a weave and experiential constellation) that causes the word to be said. From here onwards, to the word 'communication' we will oppose the word *composition* (or processes of interaction, collective valorization, system of productive compatibilities), understanding as such the sketching of a plane in whose interior the *word* does say *something*.

Finally, something that might be easy to say but difficult to accept: how to narrate the fact that research militancy is not the name of the experience of someone who does research but that of the production of (an) *encounter(s)* without *subject(s)* or, if you prefer, of (an) encounter(s) that produce(s) subject(s)? How to admit the fact that the Colectivo Situaciones is not the subject of its own activities, and that the encounters in which it found itself – fortunately – involved were neither foreseen nor planned or implemented at will by those who write this article? (We will come back to this.)

In an era in which 'communication' is the indisputable maxim, in which everything is out there to be communicated, and everything is justifiable by its communicable usefulness, research militancy refers to *experimentation*: not to thoughts, but to the *power to think*; not to the circumstances, but to the *possibility of experience*; not to this or that concept, but to *experiences* by which such notions acquire *power* (*potencia*); not to identities but to a *different becoming*; in one word: intensity does not lie so much in that which is produced (that which is 'communicable') as in the process of production itself (that which is lost in 'communication'). How to *say* something, then, about all this and not merely exhibit the *results* of such a process?

III

Let's turn to what our friend from Madrid calls 'decision' – and we call experiment, rather, as 'indecision.' How does research militancy arise? What is it that we call

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establishing links with those who experiment in other places. This bond is incompatible with the pure "will to communicate."

militant research? What is it made of? Answering these questions would be more or less like telling the *history* of the Collective. But that history does not exist. In its place we can – at best – force things a little and reconstruct briefly a trajectory. But how to do it? How to say something interesting about such homely issues?

For very complex – and, as we suppose, very frequent – reasons, towards the end of the decade of the 1990s, as a group of comrades we began to look through what had been – and still was – our shared experience. We found two issues with which to come to terms: on one side, *militant commitment* as a directly political element and the efficacy of our experience thus far; on the other, our *relation to the university* and the processes of generation of knowledge. This double problematization is a good starting point.

The group, then, developed reconsidering these two faces of its existence: the one that rose from looking through its own militant practice, and the other, which asked itself about the modes in which political practice is related 'from within' to the production of effective knowledges.

There were two figures to interrogate: on one hand, the remains of the 'sad militant' – as Miguel Benasayag[6] (who was a key figure in this period of elaboration and in many of the notions we use to think our own 'decisions') calls it – who is always 'setting out the party line' and keeping for himself a knowledge of what ought to happen in the situation, which he always approaches from outside, in an instrumental and transitive way (situations have value as moments of a general strategy that encompasses them), because his fidelity is, above all, ideological and preexists all situations.

The other figure to problematize is that of the 'university researcher,' detached, unchangeable, who links himself to his research as to an object of analysis whose value is strictly related to his capacity to confirm preexisting theses. Here, once again, fidelity to institutional procedures, academic or para-academic, eludes any commitment to the situation.

The issue was, in any case, to transform the very foundations of our practice, the presuppositions on which research stands. We can identify here, then, a first decision: to create a practice capable of articulating *involvement* and *thought*.

In turn, this (in)decision implied a whole series of operational resolutions: we had to reorganize ourselves as a smaller group, based in an intense affective affinity as the foundation of a greater commitment (and higher productivity), and also reorganize our way of working entirely. This process, which culminated in the formation of the collective, became frenetic during the years 1999 and 2000.

In practical terms, what has research militancy meant for us since then? That politics abandoned power as an image in which to recognize itself and found in thought a more

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6   The notion of Militant Researcher itself came up, for us, from the encounter with Miguel. See Benasayag, M and D. Sztulwark (2000) *Política y Situación: De la Potencia al Contrapoder*. Buenos Aires: De mano en mano. Later published in French and Italian as Benasayag, M and D. Sztulwark (2002) *Du contre-pouvoir*. Paris: La Découverte; and Benasayag, M and D. Sztulwark (2002) *Contropotere*. Milan: Eleuthera.

powerful (*potente*) interlocutor. And that our way of thinking was related – precisely – to practices. That thought and politics depended on the capacity for experience, involvement, and encounter. And that the subject of knowledge or of political action could not be conceived as transcendent with respect to situations, but made itself present for us as an effect of those encounters. If there was a *hinge* decision, in this sense, it was that of thinking 'in and from' the *situation*; that is, without conceiving practices, theories, or subjects 'a priori.'

The emergence of Colectivo Situaciones was directly linked to that of other practices that emerged toward the end of the 1990s in Argentina as both cause and product of the social and political crisis[7] that was brewing since then.[8] From then on, we found ourselves involved in the hyper-accelerated dynamic of the crisis (whose peak were the events of December 19th and 20th of 2001), and in the dizzy transformations that took place in the country. In this variable context we developed some working hypotheses, which were, perhaps, precarious but suitable at least in order to participate in this process – still open, under very ambivalent forms – in an active way.

At this point in the story it may be productive to pose some of the questions that we formulated to ourselves in order to ponder the problematicity that organized this trajectory, avoiding a history of 'happy decisions,' which would erase every real mark of concrete labour. And so, with which perceptual and conceptual mechanisms is it possible to capture the emergence of these new elements of sociability if they demand, precisely, a new disposition to feel and think? How to link ourselves to the fragility of this emergence, helping its development rather than contributing to neutralize it, even against our intentions? What degree of ignorance do we need to arm ourselves with in order to make research a real organizer of our practices and not merely a tactical façade?

According to our friend, in the experience of Precarias a la Deriva, "the driving force of our Militant Research is a desire for common ground when the common ground is shattered. That is why it has, for us, a performative-connective function: something like the activity of a communicative Wobbly, of a weaver of affective-linguistic territorialities."

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7   And, yet, it is not productive to reduce the presentation of these experiences/experiments to their relation – of cause or of effect – to the subsequent social and political crisis in Argentina. In fact, all these experiments had been producing an extended elaboration whose fundamental point of origin was the failure of revolution in the decade of the 1970s. In relation to this balance – in which the issue was to maintain a commitment but rediscussing at length the conditions and procedures – a vast spectrum of comrades recreated ideas and ways of approaching struggle. Our participation, at that moment, in the Che Guevara Free Lectureship was inscribed within this fabric.

8   Our first activities had to do with the articulation of our encounters with the experience/experiment of escraches by H.I.J.O.S., with the MLN-Tupamaros, with the Peasants Movement of Santiago del Estero (MOCASE) and with the Movement of Unemployed workers (MTD) of Solano. [The word 'escrache' is Argentinean slang that means 'exposing something outrageous.' Escraches are street demonstrations in front of the houses where people involved in human rights violations during the dictatorship live. H.I.J.O.S. is the acronym for Children for Identity and Justice, against Oblivion and Silence. Also, 'hijos' is the Spanish word for 'children.' This organization was formed in 1995 by children of the disappeared during the dictatorship (1976-1983). –Tr.]

This driving force that gives impulse to the Precarias a la Deriva, that search for "the common ground that has shattered," constitutes for us a fundamental question: how to produce consistency between experiences/experiments of a counterpower that neither emerges any longer as spontaneously unified nor does it desire an external, imposed, state-like union? How to articulate the points of power (*potencia*) and creation without developing a hierarchizing unity in charge of 'thinking' on behalf of 'everyone,' of 'leading' 'everyone'? How to draw lines of resonance within the existing networks without either subordinating or submitting?

Research militancy takes shape, at least among us, as a series of operations when in the face of concrete problems (or of anguish that stubbornness turns into productive interrogations): how to establish bonds capable of altering our subjectivities and finding some sort of community in the middle of today's radical *dispersion*? How to provoke interventions that strengthen horizontality and resonances, avoiding both hierarchical centralism and pure fragmentation? And, to continue in this line: how to co-elaborate thinking in common with the experiences/experiments that have been elaborating hyper-intelligent practices? How to produce authentic compositions, clues that later circulate through the diffuse network of counterpower, without being perceived as an outsider to the experience of thought, but, at the same time, without merging with experience(s) that is/are not *directly* our own? How to avoid ideologization, the idealization with which everything that generates interest is welcome in our times? What kind of writing does justice to that which is produced in a singular situation? What is to be done with the *friendship* that arises from these encounters? How do we continue later? And, finally, what to do with *ourselves*, if with each of these experiences/experiments of composition we get further and further away from our initial subjectivities, now without being able to return?

The list of these (in)decisions gives an idea of the collection of problems that often arise among experiences/experiments that are sometimes quite different. The friends from *Universidad Trashumante*[9] say that when they start a workshop they know "how to start, but not how to end." If there is a productive (in)decision it is – precisely – that of not knowing in advance how are we going to both go through all these issues and be ready to face them time and again, to the point that the absence of this insistence speaks more of the collapse of the ongoing experience than of its maturation – or its 'being overcome.'

Indeed, the consistency of the experience that follows the *encounter* is staked more on these procedures than on the invocation of a common *ideal*. In our experience of research militancy, the labour of dissolving ideology as constitutive cement of cohesion (be it 'autonomist,' 'horizontalist,' 'situationist,' or 'multiple') has turned out to be decisive. In our context, *idealization* is a destructive force. A real, contradictory, rich, and always conflictive experience is placed on the one-dimensional pedestal of the

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9   Universidad Trashumante is an itinerant collective based in the city of San Luis, Argentina, whose field of activity includes popular education, the recuperation of popular memory, and the production of grassroots networks. After the publication of this article, Colectivo Situaciones published a book based on dialogues with those involved in this experience/experiment: Colectivo Situaciones (2004) *Universidad Trashumante: Territorios, Redes, Lenguajes*. Buenos Aires: Tinta Limón –Tr.

redeeming ideal. Operations are idealized that permit the experience/experiment to produce existence. This is, then, transformed into a 'good form' to apply anytime and anywhere, as a new set of *a priori* principles. It is, subsequently, asked to be able to confirm this ideal for everyone. The fragility of the experience/experiment creates tensions. How to sustain that burden? Later, of course, deception comes and, with it, destruction continues: "I thought this time it really was it, but it was only a fraud." What to do when we are faced with this mechanism of massive adhesions and rejections, which elevate and dethrone radical experiments repeating the consumerist mechanisms of the society of the spectacle? What resources do we have in hand to look after this unexpected front of *exteriority* to which the ideal subordinates us? What effective modes of implication place us inside these procedures: in their *reality* and no longer in their ideality?

Indeed, in our experience there is a very strong component of thinking against the ideals in their function as promise. That is to say: how to work from the power (*potencia*) of what is and not of what 'ought to be' (ideal)? Above all, when the ideal is a – more or less arbitrary – personal projection to which nobody has necessarily to adapt. Research militancy does not extract its commitment from a model of the future, but from a search for power (*potencia*) in the present. That is why the most serious fight is against the 'a priori,' against predefined schemes. Fighting the a priori, then, does not imply giving up for dead any stretch of reality. Nothing needs to die. It does imply, however, a permanent introspective revision over the type of perceptions that we are bringing into play in each situation.

We think that the labour of research militancy is linked to the construction of a new *perception*, a new working style towards tuning up and empowering (*potenciar*) the elements of a new sociability. Perhaps the figure to describe it would be clay: a capacity to receive affections without opposing resistances, in order to understand the real play of powers (*potencias*). The question is not, then, to configure a center that thinks radical practices, but to elaborate a style that allows us to become immanent to this multiplicity, without being insiders to each multiple: a multiple among multiples, a métier that, while doing its own thing, is involved with the others.

It will be clear, then, that the main (in)decision of research militancy is shared by the multiplicity in which it operates, and does not belong (except in fantasy) to the group that claims to be doing research, as if it existed before and outside this multiple.

IV

As we noticed at the beginning of the article – and from our own experience as a collective – *there are not any* 'procedures' outside the situation. To produce a narrative on the activities that the collective carries out, a formalization of its 'knowledges,' would be so inadmissible as making a 'manual' on RM, and that – a dismayingly poor gesture – is in nobody's mind.

When one looks back and observes the work done, things appear invested of a coherence and functionality they by no means had at the very moment of their

production. That recollection, that 'anti-utilitarian' insistence, is vital for the development of research militancy, at least in our view.

When we talk about 'workshops' and 'publications' as practices of the collective, we immediately find ourselves in need of remembering that there are no such 'workshops,' but an heterogeneous conglomerate of meetings without other threads of coherence than those that suddenly spring up from chaos and without knowing exactly how to develop them. Something similar happens to the publications: they emerge as provisional needs to invoke the presence of other experiences with whom to extend ourselves, but they do not represent a necessary phase of a larger system.

So, "we only know how to start." And that very relatively. In fact, all the procedures (mechanisms) that we prepare prove to be authentically inappropriate when confronted with the texture of a concrete situation. Thus, the very conditions of the encounter are somewhat anticipated by the shared will to co-research, it does not matter much what about (the topic might change), as long as in this 'journey' we all experiment substantial changes, that is, that we emerge with new capacities to empower (*potenciar*) practices.

Then, whatever it is that operates setting the conditions, there is a prior functionality of the workshop: to produce an 'uncoupling' (in each meeting, once and again) from the immediate everyday spatiality and velocity. The disposition to think emerges from allowing thought itself to be what spatializes and temporalizes according to its own requirements.

According to our friend from Madrid, there is, in this "search in the surroundings of the experiences of self-organization, in approaching them in order to propose work in common, an immediate problem that comes up: that of the exteriority (theirs) in relation to the reality to which they come close, more so when their condition and their biography is so different from that of the people with whom they come in touch with. In fact, to break with the separation between 'we' and 'they' is one of the fundamental challenges of their workshops." Above all if those encounters are animated by the "search for a radicality that is not said from high above, that clings to the surface of the real; a practice of self-interrogation, of detection of problems and launching of hypotheses (always from the practices) that would constitute the 'hardcore' of militant research."

But, is it like that? Does *difference* inevitably lead to *distance*? What distances and differences are we talking about? And regarding the image of *approaching*, to what *perception* does it refer?

We could call 'procedures' precisely those forms of 'putting into practice' that arise from the questions about how to come to terms with the existence of *differences*. How to build an *us* of thought, albeit a transient one? How to lay out a common plane as a condition, although more or less ephemeral, of joint production? These questions are valid for the social experiences/experiments that are apparently 'close' as much as for those supposedly 'distant.'

The movement of the encounter, then, is not so much one of getting closer as it is of *elaboration* of a *common plane*. And this refers to a more complex scenario, in which

the mutual measurement of 'distances' and 'proximities' (the 'insides' and 'outsides') should not be considered only in relation to the initial *positions* (of departure) but also – and above all – with respect to whether one's own *plane* (which includes steps forward and backward, enthusiasms and distrusts, periods of production and depressive lacunae) is drawn or not.

Without a doubt, a plane difficult to draw: counterpower exists only as a fold or knot between heterogeneous experiences/experiments. One dynamic is *territorial*, the others more *deterritorialized*. Thus, the territory is *impoverished* and the more deterritorialized experiences/experiments are *virtualized* without this common fabric (without this encounter between both). Deterritorialized spatiality and territorial modes are polarities inside the fold of counterpower and their being knotted to one another is one of the fundamental matters of the new radicality. The experiences/experiments more linked to the territory – more 'concentrated' – and those more 'diffuse' – more nomadic – can, in their dynamic difference, articulate, combine, or interact as instances of an occupation of the public sphere by counterpower.

Difference(s), then, call for a more in-depth interrogation. On one side, of course, they exist and are evident. The postmodern impossibility of experience is nurtured by this 'festival of difference' (which, strictly speaking, becomes 'indifference,' *dispersion*). But that says nothing about the possibilities of articulation of those experiences.

Moreover, we could ask whether an *experience/experiment* has value as such – and, in this sense, a profound *political* character – precisely when it manages to suspend that *indifferent* enacting of differences. When one manages to produce a conjunction (or plane) capable of subtracting itself from the 'logic of pure heterogeneity' (which says 'differences separate' and "there is no possible connection in the *indifferent difference*"). An experience/experiment – or situation – would be, then, that which is founded in the articulation of points (as relative as they might be) of a certain *homogeneity*. The question is neither to erase nor to disguise differences, but to summon them from setting out certain *common problems*.

Let's go back to our friend from Precarias a la Deriva: "I wonder whether you interrogate yourselves about your own composition and biography, about the position of your equals, and whether this militant research with others precedes or accompanies a self-analysis, above all in order not to fall in the trap of a displacement that avoids questioning one's life and one's own practices (and that ends up introducing a split between militancy and life). In Precarias a la Deriva we consider as a primary problem to 'start from oneself,' as one among many, in order to 'get out of oneself' (both of the individual ego and the radical group to which one belongs) and encounter with any other resisting people (hence what I said above about being between exteriority and interiority, in a dislocated ourselves)."

Precarias a la Deriva claim to "politicize life from within." To turn life itself – from immediate experience – into something political, that is, committed. We would formulate this another way: to revitalize politics by immersing it in the most immediate multiple experience. We use these phrases not without a certain uneasiness because they sometimes refer to the idea that "there is something missing in life," "life still needs to

be well organized." Perhaps it would be better to talk about a politics that measures up to life itself. And even in this case we think this is not enough, because we prefer without a doubt a life that disorganizes politics rather than a 'good politics' that manages to organize it, displacing it, proposing to it transcendental problems, determining its 'priorities and obligations.'

But let's go deeper inside the questions of our friend: why does Colectivo Situaciones look for sites of intervention *outside*? What truth do we expect to find in *different* people? Is this not a sort of *escape* from the exigency to politicize 'our own lives' in their everydayness? Moreover, in all this isn't there a renewal of the old militancy (the classical exteriority) under new forms, to the extent that – beyond rehashed languages and mechanisms – people keep *going* ('approaching') 'from outside' to 'other places' out of which they expect a more or less magical solution to their own subjective and political constitution?

These questions would be rhetorical if we only formulated them in order to refute them. It turns out, however, that it is not true that these are questions that can be eliminated in a single stroke. They live inside us and speak to us of certain tendencies whose control completely escapes our manifest intentions. Again and again we must insist on them, because there is no definitive antidote and, moreover, they are tendencies widely favoured by the dominant social dynamics. In fact, the main value of formulating them is to force ourselves to work in-depth on the problem of *exteriority*.

Nevertheless, there is another image that it would be necessary to consider. Not only that of *finite* points escaping their tragic destiny of radical exteriority, and producing simulacra of 'interiority' (the union of the 'separate as separate,' as Guy Debord says), but also that of points that need (and work) to find resonances with the resonances of others.[10] The distinction might seem hollow, even though it describes opposite paths: while in dispersion (*exteriority*) the alternatives oscillate between 'irremediable fragmentation' or 'necessary centralization;' once the plane is drawn (a very different alternative to that of 'inside and outside'), consistency refers to a *transversality*.[11]

Of course, we would still have ahead of us resisting the accusation of 'spontaneism.' A curious thing, since what is *spontaneous* is not *composition* but – precisely – dispersion. And the question we pose to ourselves is what to do with it. Is centralization the only viable alternative? Or is the experience of that which is common strong enough to prefigure new constituent modes of doing?

This is a fundamental question for research militancy, because the elaboration of the plane is, precisely, neither spontaneous nor irreversible, but rather requires a fine and sustained practice (which we would call 'procedures' and which we could not define

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10 Of course, *outside* and *inside* do not refer to a predefined spatiality, but to different immanent or transcendent ways of conceiving the bond: when we establish bonds with others seeking to create new worlds, are we looking *outside*? Or, put another way, what to do if those 'other worlds' already exist in the process of creation, in acts of resistance? Would we sacrifice our *common* being with others in the name of a purely physical vicinity determined by crudely spatial criteria?

11 Which helps understanding the *non-institutional* horizon of research militancy.

abstractly) of collaboration in order to make this *commonality* emerge in (and from) difference (*immanence* is a strategy of *cutting in* exteriority).

Thus, from this persistent construction work in a context of fragmentation we can come back to the question of everydayness. Our obsession with *composition* is precisely inscribed in this concern about 'ourselves,' but under a new set of suppositions: the overcoming of *dispersal* is not solved by way of *representation*. The question of immanence, then, would be: how to *be*/with/*others*?

As in a phenomenology, we could then describe the path of research militancy as the manifestation of this rejection of exteriority and spectacle, along with – and as a procedure for – the production of keys for composition, for the construction of modes of immanence.[12]

If collective experience has for us any meaning, it is – above all – the way in which it allows us to confront, produce, and inhabit the context in which we live-produce actively: neither as a 'subject who knows and explains' nor in the individual passivity of postmodernity. A capacity that appears to us in the form of recognizing ourselves as multiple within a multiplicity and of coming to terms with a certain mode of being of that multiplicity in practice.

Hence the strong *existential* components of research militancy.[13] And the absurdity of pretending that it becomes a 'task' (or, even worse, the 'fundamental task') of the movement.[14]

The questions that research militancy has are but the questions that hundreds of groups[15] ask themselves: What new elements of sociability emerge? Which ones will persist (do they persist?) and which ones disintegrate? What kind of relations (barriers and bridges)

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12 In this sense, both the knowledges produced and the current questions about the *construction of networks* acquire a very precise value: Isn't it valid to look for transversal forms of composition that articulate the social practices of different groups on the basis of what they can have (and defend) in common? It seems clear that these experiments in networks can be very useful in order to know each other (and ourselves) and to relate to each other (and to ourselves), but, what happens when we reach the limit of the tensions that a network can generate? Isn't it necessary, then, to de-center the networks, to produce new nodes, to conceive heterogeneous planes, and to open oneself towards stretches of the network that have not been *made explicit*?

13 *Falling in love* or *friendship* is how we call the feeling that accompanies and envelops *composition*. And, precisely, we experiment research militancy as the perception that something develops between us and in others, at least for a moment; above all, when, instead of being lost in anonymity, this *moment* sparks off other moments, and the memory that is the result of that sequence becomes a 'productive resource' of the situation. This is the most persistent feeling we have about the concrete meaning of becoming 'something else.'

14 Above all if what we take into consideration is the extent to which research militancy does not seek to 'organize others.' Not because it renounces organization – there is no research militancy without high levels of organization – but because its problem is posed in terms of a self-organization that collaborates with the self-organization of networks.

15 Shared problems in the face of which there is no subject-object distinction. The researcher is the person who participates in the problematization. And the research objects are problems, ways of posing them, and self-research about dispositions to be able to pose those problems.

are drawn by the instances of the state and the market? How do the new resistances emerge? What problems are posed at the different levels?

Now that we are at this point it is, perhaps, possible to perceive the difference between thinking the *situation* in its universality or simply assuming it *locally*. When we talk about a situation we talk about the mode in which the *universal* appears *in* the local, not about the local as 'part' of the global. That is why the drift of the situation is much more interesting (sinuous) than the locality itself. If the *local* is defined by a fixed environment and a limited and predefined set of resources, reducing its alliances to neighboring points, the situational is actively produced, in determining its dimensions and multiplying its resources. Unlike the local, the situational expands the capacities for *composition-affection*.[16]

V

While 'exteriority' names the *spatial* impossibility of *connection*, dispersion is produced in the plane of *temporality*, by acceleration, preventing us from finding a point to stop, to elaborate. In any case, questions seem to be: what does *politics* in this context (a 'nocturnal politics,' as Mar Traful says[17]) consist of? Are the elements of our practices powerful (*potentes*) enough to become constituent of experience, of a new politics? What are the ways of 'measuring' such efficacy?

In any case, if these questions come up (as Marx said) it is because there are practical elements that justify them. But these elements neither explain nor develop those questions.

A new type of politics: what would it be like? And, more specifically, what type of exigencies does the possibility of a new understanding of politics present to research militancy? What can the experience of research militancy contribute to this understanding?

From our angle, these questions refer to the forms of efficacy of action: what kind of intervention does it *construct*? What does the *power* (*potencia*) of the *act* depend upon?

Research militancy experiments, as we have said, the development of new modules of space-time. It experiments the becoming agent (*agenciamiento*) of heterogeneous elements in points of homogeneity that both turn dispersive experience (a desert) into a

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16 The exchange with *Precarias a la Deriva* has for us a fundamental immediate value. Moreover, the exchanges maintained on the basis of this article have left the trace of a certain style of work that it is necessary to deepen and, in this sense, are not very far from what we call 'workshops.' 'Workshops' are, then, just like that. They do not constitute themselves – nor they aspire to – into the General Staff of the situation: they constitute themselves as a point of encounter capable of thinking and, in the best of cases, elaborating practical hypotheses with the force of an intervention.

17 *Por una política nocturna.* Barcelona: Editorial Debate, 2002. [http://www.sindominio.net/ofic2004/publicaciones/pn/indice.html]

matter upon which it is possible to elaborate and produce notions of composition (beyond the discourse of *communication*).

In a concrete situation, as we usually tell ourselves, intelligence springs up neither from erudition nor from pure quickness of mind, but rather from the capacity for *involvement*. In the same way that stultification can be explained by very concrete forms of *distraction*.[18]

Hence the possibility of establishing a concrete link between the *affective-fabric* that operates in a situation and its operational productivity.[19]

Thus, what determines the *efficacy* of the *act* is not so much the number, quantity, or massive nature (*aggregation* capacity), as is the *aptitude* for composition of the new *relations* (*consistency* capacity).

As is evident, what we are suggesting is linked to a very concrete situation: the *current* Argentinean crisis. Here a desert blown by violent neoliberal winds blasted the bonds that had been produced and intensified the process of dispersion to which we have been referring. The social practices committed to the development of a counterpower experimented this tension between the configuration of new bonds and the massive demand for containment. This tension, in fact, manifested itself as a contradiction between quantitative presence (of dispersed elements waiting to be reunited) and need of a system of new relations capable of sustaining this process of aggregation, no longer as a mere reunification of the dispersed but as a new type of *active configuration*.

In fact, one of the features of Argentina during the last months has been precisely the way in which the meteoric growth experimented by numerous social groupings is immediately followed by a rapid degradation. Then, we are not talking about some kind of absurd invalidation of mass actions or organizations,[20] but rather about an interrogation posed by the criteria that make experiments influential.

Much likely there is not one single valid criterion in this regard. Each experience/experiment of struggle and creation needs to produce its own resources and procedures. We only intend to raise the following question: what does 'aggregation' add to composition, given that the latter – unlike the former – organizes people and resources convoked according to certain constituent relations (considering this valid at any numeric or geographic scale)?

Hasta Siempre, Colectivo Situaciones, February 29th, 2004.

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18 On this see the very interesting lessons of Joseph Jacotot, brought to us by Rancière in a book that is fundamental for us: Ranciere, J. (1991) *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

19 In this sense we can fully rehabilitate – from our most immediate experience – the theories that speak about an 'affect-value.'

20 There is no doubt that the insurrectional actions of the Argentinean December of 2001 opened a new and fertile field of actions and debates of all kinds and, even closely, the same sequence is empowered (*potenciada*) by the revolts that took place in Bolivia in 2003.