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## Politics of Desire in the New Economy. From the historical background to critical artistic and social movements in Spain

Políticas del Deseo en la New Economy. De los fundamentos históricos a la crítica artística y los movimientos sociales en España

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### Abstract

This paper aims to analyze the factors related to affectivity, emotions and desire as key elements in the social production of subjectivity and the actual economic dynamics. Its aim is to explore the correspondence between the early critiques to modernity and the current New Economy model. To this end, it will focus on the political economy of creative industries in which the production of desires is understood to be an asset of productivity and it responds to the last capitalist reform. Special emphasis will be placed on how a critical community emerges and is able to question the contemporary labour conditions, not only to those who work in the vulnerable field of creative work but including a large range of unprotected workers. This analysis will take the form of multiple significant case studies, which will help to show how to suggest an alternative concept of emotion and desire, and how we can recover methods from past artistic avant-gardes and their engagement with social movements that had worked in this direction to create new communities and new political subjects in the contemporary economic context.

**Keywords:** Desire; Governmentality; Creative Industries; Precariat; New Economy.

### Resumen

Este trabajo tiene como objetivo analizar procesos y discursos, históricos y contemporáneos, relacionados con la afectividad, las emociones y el deseo como elementos clave en la producción social de subjetividades y en las dinámicas económicas. Su objetivo es explorar la correspondencia entre las primeras críticas a la modernidad y el modelo de nueva economía actual. Para ello, nos centraremos en la economía política de las industrias creativas, en las que la producción de deseo se entiende como un activo productivo y responde a la última reforma capitalista. Los casos de estudio visibilizarán cómo emergen ciertas comunidades críticas desde el campo artístico para cuestionar estos discursos hegemónicos y las condiciones laborales actuales, tanto del trabajador cultural como de otros tantos trabajadores desprotegidos. Las prácticas de los diversos casos escogidos, pretenden mostrar cómo un conceptos alternativos de la emoción y el deseo, recuperados desde la tradición militante y la tradición artística, han ayudado a renovar el vocabulario político de los movimientos sociales españoles para crear nuevas formas de comunidad y nuevas formas de subjetivación política en el contexto económico actual.

**Palabras clave:** Deseo; Gubernamentalidad; Industrias Creativas; Precarizados; New Economy.

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## Politics of Desire in the New Economy. From the historical background to critical artistic and social movements in Spain

### Introduction

Given the changes in cultural policies over the past years, it can be argued that the modern notion of culture is being displaced by two main processes, the first based on the economization of culture and the second on the culturalization of the economy. The first one is the result of the emergence of government departments dedicated to the creative industries, now sustained not by a policy of grants but rather through bank loans and programs to incentivize entrepreneurship. The second involves those processes whereby the experiential and emotional become part of economic practice. The combination of these two factors gives rise to the expansion of the neoliberal discourse centred on the figure of the entrepreneur, defined as capable of boosting the economy and introducing innovative strategies and processes able to develop capitalism. It is from the viewpoint of this economic discourse, based on appeals to the subject's desire to excel, perform or be free, that we can speak of the insecurity and self-exploration of the cultural and knowledge-workers. But in the crossroads of the new economy model the worker involved in creative tasks is not the only one who is vulnerable. In the field of tertiary sectors there are other forms of *precariat* such as irregular workers, immigrants, and unprotected subjects.

On the one hand, the idea of the Romantic artist developed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has emerged as a key component in the design of public and private-sector policies, able to transform the production relationships through its creative potential. Indeed, many have viewed this figure as a resource for cities, tourism, economic development based on intangible and cognitive work or social development. On the other hand, similar narratives such as self-improvement desire or emotional links with labour can be found in corporate structures and social life. As noted by Eva Illouz (2007),

emotions and desires are psychological elements, but they are also, to a greater extent, social and cultural elements of capitalism, and capitalism came about as a result of the construction of a highly specialized emotional culture. Through the language of therapy, concerns about emotional life, fears, feelings and desires expand beyond their epicenter in consumer society to become a productive power based on the regulation and rationalization of workers' behaviour when societies became oriented toward a service economy – on its way to the so-called post-industrial society (Illouz, 2007: 16).

In this paper, we will look at the historical development of desire as a productive power, a will for power, as well as at the emergence of certain narratives in which desire and creativity is seen as fuelling the social machine. We will see how these narratives contributed to the pursuit of liberal forms of government throughout the nineteenth century and how, in the era of advanced capitalism, they have helped to perpetuate the governance of desire as the key point to develop the new economy model. Through some Spanish case studies we are going to explore how the subject realizes affectivities using emotions, in the sense of experimenting and thinking how we are immersed in the economical and social conditions. We analyze how social movements and cultural and cognitive workers are now aimed at recovering desire and emotions as tools for collective action, reinventing forms of struggle, and creating new types of militancy. In a few words, this research explores the genealogy of desire as a governmental force, seen both as a force to the development of State and capitalism or as a force to create informal political communities.

### Historical Basis of Politics as Desire

Within a much more general framework and in light of the genealogy of these processes, it

is worth noting the implementation of a number of mechanisms related to subjects' governability through irrational elements such as emotions and desire. With a view to establishing a genealogy of the relationship between these processes and the cultural field, an entire historical process can be identified constituting an initial relationship between desire and political subjectivity.

As noted by Michel Foucault (1984), it was at the dawn of modern societies that a series of transformations first occurred in the different forms of government, including the secularization of governability, i.e., the shift from a leadership based on religious sources to leadership by civil society itself. This, in turn, resulted in the proliferation of different forms of this art of governing (how to govern a family, cities, states, and the body). There was thus a secularization of *how to rule* and a diversification of *what to rule*. Historically, the *Aufklärung*, or Enlightenment, was the great process of society's governmentalization; that is, the process whereby society moved from a situation in which power was exerted over the subject from the outside and the subject was passively involved in the power relationship, to one based on the self-constitutive exercise of power, an internalized power and, hence, one activated by subjects themselves.

Thus, according to German thinkers involved in the political theory and philosophy of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, one of the main paradoxes and problems of modernity emerged in opposition to this idea of the "liberated" individual. Based on the development of a self-constituted subject that would ultimately serve to configure a collective subject whose maximum representation was the State,<sup>1</sup> it was derived that culture and arts, as a truly free field -given that it served no utilitarian ends but they rather were ends in themselves and therefore universal ones- could become a resolution for the divided subject between duty and freedom.

From a historical perspective, numerous cases and processes can be found to support the idea of these transformations in the cultural field as a tool of government that ultimately appeals to subjects' desires. Whether through affirmation or resistance, the coordination of instances of desire with the political constitutes one of the foundations on which many of the cultural and social movements

of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are based (in a broad spectrum, ranging from early Romanticism to conservative Revolutions, with strong links to nationalist movements and all the way up to Marxist or emancipatory projects).

Within the context of that initial group of German thinkers, one could point to the statements of Johann Gottlieb Fichte. Reflecting on those methods of modern government that, appealed to the concept of *civilization* (Elias, 1999), Fichte sought to identify the key element emanating as the most intimate desire, and, thus, one internal to the subject, which would therefore make self-government desirable and voluntary.<sup>2</sup> In this sense, it is helpful to look at the ideas set forth in his text *Addresses to the German Nation*, written in 1807 (1922). According to Fichte, the transition from the old regime to the Enlightenment led to a 'weakness of governments', since it removed the bond between individual and community previously based on religion. To offset this weakness, other binding ties appeared, such as morals, fear and hope.

But Germany, as a means for achieving France's goals, never its own, lost the ability to manage these emotional ties (fear and hope). Fichte thus proposed a primary need for a new means of bonding and, above all, one that was inherent to the German people (close to the *affect* idea). This means, the affection that arouse from irrational feelings such as community desire would configure the processes of modernization of the nation state. According to Fichte, a strict administration of individual wills to the extent that political institutions become instances of the innermost self (and one that appeals to the spiritual). Fichte excluded the Reformation, as it was *par excellence* the paradigm of the achievement of the will of the German people. The Reformation represented the struggle's voluntary sacrifice emerging from the people, from the inner self of each of its members, without any further coercion than that to which each subject subjects his or her own will, since this will appeal to the most deeply held values: life and the perpetuation of the Germanic community. Therefore, the Reformation triumphed because of the

<sup>2</sup> We are addressing here the particular case of Germany, where, in the early nineteenth century, as in the other members of the handful of absolutist states, in which the emerging middle class did not participate in politics, literary activity was, in essence, a substitute for political action. Hence, the common concern in those years was in dialogue with the prevailing desire to establish the discourse of a culturally distinct nation and, thus, one with natural rights that situated Germanness in opposition to French-dominated civilization.

<sup>1</sup> Foucault exposed this problem of modernity when he detected that modern political thought addresses the question of *how not to be governed* rather than the ideal of *not being governed at all*.

connection established between the (biblical) story and life itself as expressed in the German language.

At this point, it must be emphasized that these early nineteenth-century discourses led to a certain concept of *device* that Foucault would use in his early work on disciplinary methods. It is precisely when Fichte appeals to the non-coercive methods of government of liberalism –imposed following the French invasion– that it becomes necessary to speak metaphorically of ‘social machines’ and devices (1922: 185-188).

From the artistic and cultural fields, Romanticism has developed an artist idea which implied that, with his creative power or his emotional aesthetic affections he could be able to reject working modes of the industrial productivism. The self-improvement and the creative thinking of the artist could be a tool for changing the way of life and working organization. Here we can mention William Morris as a figure in the UK context. Morris (1999) fights for improved proletarian labour, not just for wages or less working hours, but using the Marx’s idea of a desirable, dignified, and pleasurable labour. Here was the Morris sense of *Art and Labour* at the end of the Nineteenth century; innovation and creativity serve for improving living and working conditions. In the next point we’ll see how these ideas pass to management strategies of the New Economy model. As has been said by Andrew Ross (2003: 100) in knowledge companies, creativity in all forms is the core value, no-collars are lead toward an improved efficiency where new kinds of thinking expand the limits of intelligent thought where the opposites, inconsistencies, and ambiguities produce creative sparks.

These processes gave rise to an understanding of the cultural and artistic fields that since the Nineteenth century, as many cultural theorists have noted (Williams, 1960; Eagleton, 2000), ultimately formed an ideal art forced to stand in for God or happiness or political justice, according to the narrative of modernism (Eagleton, 2000: 16).

### **The Problem of Desire in the Twentieth Century: From Desire-based Consumption to Desire-based Production**

We have just seen how relevant the concepts of desire and emotions in the critical discourses were. Since German idealism, non-rational drives had served to the protest movement against instrumentalization excesses. Feelings and emotions such as those

involved in cultural and social membership where thought by philosophers (Hegel, 1999; Tönnies 1947, and Durkheim, 1993) as the primitive drive that gives a community its true cohesion. In that way, the community myth was differentiated from the society idea. Society was indeed founded on external and not affective rational principles. Thereby, both social and artistic movements appealed to feelings in order to reject unfair social conditions. Here we can mention the call to the ancient communities thought as a fair and equitable society in the Romanticism movement and the first utopian socialism; irrational thinking, and the inner subjectivity was used by Surrealism, Expressionism or Futurism as a challenging tool against the bourgeoisie logic. Emotion as a way to affect was a true guarantee of an even truer knowledge. Having no space to develop these questions, we can mention The Situationist International, in the mid twentieth century, as an organization that brought social revolutionaries and artists together. Situationism was one of the last movements that pointed out desire as a key concept to develop critical responses to capitalism. This manifestation recovers bonds between art and social critique. Art was the appropriated place linked to experimentation and creativity where to rethink new forms of political action. Situationism fed the May 1968 insurrections and the counterculture struggles of the 1970s.

Reformulating the avant-garde slogan *Art and Life*, this new social critique restructured desire and affect in the sense: *The personal is political*. But, as political tools for the new political subject, this critical apparatus would likewise eventually be absorbed by the different forms of flexible work organization and business management in the late twentieth century. As noted by Boltanski and Chiapello (2002), beginning in the second half of the 1980s, the absorption of employees’ own aspirations to cooperate on productive development and the redirection of the critique of Taylorist alienation and expectations of individual achievement and greater autonomy as a result of the increasingly precarious nature of employment would help to shape the ‘new spirit of capitalism.’ In this way, one can explore crossroads between social critique, artistic movements and capitalism: how the first has got rich by taking modern artistic principles such as autonomy, self-organization and creativity (Boltanski-Chiapello, 2002: 89) and how capitalism has absorbed it. For instance, management literature will reject hierarchy; adore flexible organization and creativity in order to an

adaptation to change; coaching will appeal to feelings and desires of self-improvement, self-development and a (corporation) joy of belonging; a 'more human' workplaces where employees need communal living skills, sensitivity to disagreement or attraction to informal processes (Boltanski-Chiapello, 2002: 149).

With regard to the structural transformations that capitalism began to undergo in the second half of the twentieth century, we must look at the creative and knowledge industries as one of the epicentres where all these processes occur. Andrew Ross (2004: 15) points out that fare wages exigencies had been displaced by the social and cultural design of the workplace. "In knowledge companies that trade in creative ideas, services, and solutions, everything that the employees do, think or say in their waking moments is a potential grist for the industrial mill. When elements of play in the office or at home/offsite are factored into creative output, then the work *tempo* is being recalibrated to incorporate activities, feelings, and ideas that are normally pursued during employees' free time" (2003: 19). Talking about the Razorfish philosophy, Ross addresses how creativity in all forms was the core value of these industries: "we are working toward an improved efficiency where new kinds of thinking expand the limits of intelligent thought. Unprecedented thinking often comes into being in a non linear manner. Opposites, inconsistencies, and ambiguities produce creative sparks" (Ross, 2003: 100).

One of the most popular critical analyses in the period just before May of 1968 –the start of the opening towards so-called post-Fordism– in terms of identifying the field of cultural production as an arena for social subjugation through desire was 'The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception' by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer (2002: 94-136). Adorno and Horkheimer's theory opened the orthodox Marxist discourse through an intangible concept of desire. They explore new ways of seeing capitalism subjugation, and one of its case studies was indeed the Cultural Industry. The line worker in the Fordist production system, with no control over the conditions of production and unable to creatively reformulate his labour relations, who drowned his texts in the clichés and homogenized forms of standardization, rendered any project of real emancipation impossible since, ultimately, the mass production of culture or, to put it another way, the transformation of culture into an industry, exerted its effects by shaping the very desires and wills of

a passive consumer audience that had come to be viewed as just another mechanism for the social reproduction of the capitalist system.

In order to understand the capitalist stage of desire-based consumption in conjunction with the post-Fordist phase, which placed greater emphasis on desire as a form of production, we should point out the marked change in the capture and capitalization of desire that resulted from a structural change in the culture industry model. As noted by Raunig (2008), the creative industries diverged from the monopolistic model of major media conglomerates and came to denote a wide range of micro-enterprises, independent producers, designers, software developers, musicians and cultural activity platforms which, by operating as pseudo-institutions, have proven to be temporary, ephemeral and project-based. Therefore, while Adorno and Horkheimer lamented the end of independent art and the impossibility of returning to the figure of the freelance entrepreneur, the current situation is just the opposite (Raunig 2008: 37). It is marked by a perverse strengthening of 'freedom, independence and autonomy' whereby all these new forms of work, in comparison to the old model, also contribute to the outsourcing, and the generation of systems for this outsourcing, of services to large corporations, lowering costs by signing temporary contracts with self-employed and freelance workers. In short, this is what Richard Florida has called it the new 'creative class', promoted in all departments dedicated to cultural policy management. Which brings us to a new twist in Romanticism's arguments: the forms of artistic work, with their ability to transform how work is organized, are now the centre of attention, as "creativity is the driving force of economic growth" (Florida, 2012: xxi). As noted by Elizabeth Lorey (2006):

It is precisely these alternative living and working conditions that have become increasingly more economically utilizable in recent years because they favor the flexibility that the labour market demands. Thus, practices and discourses of social movements in the past thirty, forty years were not only dissident and directed against normalization, but also at the same time, a part of the transformation toward a neoliberal form of governmentality (Lorey, 2006: 126).

### Artistic practices, social movements and Desire: some Spanish Cases

Then how is it possible to be talking about social critique nowadays if these tools and artistic critical discourse have been disabled by the new economy model? Through some Spanish case studies we are taking into account the politics of desire and feelings again. In a non-exhaustive definition, these elements, desire (to share common experiences) and affectivity (how power relations affect our bodies) could be key pieces for the political subjectivation. As we saw it, in Fichte dissertations and beyond, individual social conditions could be thought through feelings and emotions –fear, hope or sense of belonging- in order to structure a common fighting sphere and a cohesive critical discourse. While enjoyment and wishes play a specific role in the productivity policies of the knowledge industries, artists and cultural producers involved with activism recover emotions and desire in a critical way. This crossroad between art and social critique serve, as we mention related to 68 May protests, to rethink political tools. It could be said that these case studies represent a turn to ancient romanticist tendencies. Once again artists are involved in the renewal of political discourse taking into account the relevance of emotions. It will occur not by addition to formal political organizations but by taking into account the microphysics of power; how power relations affect our daily life, our bodies. Connecting to the Idealism background, emotions and feelings are the elements that constitute us and they serve to be aware of new exploitation devices. A defense of situated knowledge, as was called by Donna Haraway (1995), is what serves these social and artistic movements to take emotions and desire in the first place and to think and act politically. In that sense, we could point other thinkers like Deleuze and Guattari (2004) or Despret (2004) in their analysis of emotions not as passive reactions but as flux and ways for regulating bodies, through which we are capable to think the world and its co-affectation.

If Fichte's theory noted the importance of affected experience and inner feelings of the German people to unify in a common fight, here we are pointing out how new economy labour conditions has obtained similar responses through some social groups.

The cases have been chosen firstly because once again we think it necessary to establish transfer between social and artistic movements; secondly because they represent the need for taking emotions

in these obsolescence's times of the classical political discourse and its institutions.

On the one hand, art has served historically to rethink political tools against capitalism; on the other, cultural workers, artists, hackers, designers and those linked to creative and knowledge industry are living in similar conditions as other social groups such as those linked with care working: care assistants, care workers, au pairs, teachers, cleaners or even non-recognized workers such as sexual workers or housewives. In that sense all of them are subjected to the neoliberal policies and institutional changes that have produced the *precariat* (Standing, 2011). *Precariat* is characterized not by their salary level or monetary income received in a given time, but by the lack of community support in times of need. Labour flexibility is forming a new majority social class marked by vulnerability. It is a heterogeneous group made of growing immigration, overqualified or under qualified workers, single mothers, and young people from deprived areas and long-term unemployed. The main link is being affected by the vagaries of market exposure. It is not an articulated group. As discussed in the case studies, one can find people involved in care work (maids, caretakers, and educators), irregular workers (immigrants, sexual workers) or creative workers involved in cognitive capitalism (performing artists, designers, hackers, and jobs related to creative industries). They are usually freelancers and work in unusual situations with insecure work contracts. In fact, they are those who are happily called cultural entrepreneurs but they are subject to similar conditions as precariat: neither social security nor health insurance, and subject to the flexible market (periods of low work intensity which alternate with work-intensive periods).

Spanish cases evidence those issues about transfers between innovative activism from artistic field and social movements: *Prearias a la deriva* works to make the new forms of exploitation derived from the model of the New Economy visible. They use artistic background to interpellate women and workers from the creative industries or knowledge, but also to workers related to care work: ODS (Office of Social Rights), groups of cultural workers and activists use the *situationist dérive*<sup>3</sup> to overcome the current forms

<sup>3</sup> *Dérive*: literally "drift" or "drifting" is mentioned in Debord's "Théorie de la dérive" in 1958: "One of the basic situationist practices is the *dérive*, a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances. *Dérives* involve playful-constructive behaviour and awareness of psychogeographical effects, and are thus quite different from the classic notions of journey or stroll. In a *dérive*

of agency (such as trade unions). This is how, this kind of workers mention *Bio-syndicate*: an auto-conceived term, as a form to neglect ancient forms of political association. This aims to be another form of political organization focused on the idea of life. Living, fears and hopes -not working- could be a common place to set a minimum shared vocabulary because today the old category of work, private and public life no longer serve to discuss labour rights. Serving this purpose other tools, such as militant research, form the Situationist context, the seventies protests and its theoretical literature, will be assumed by this militant groups. These practices engaging affects and feelings and terms related above are a way in which capitalism critique has been articulated. As said by Boltanski-Chiapello (2002), critique needs a theoretical and argumentative rhetorical level in order to translate the individual suffering into common good principles.

In light of this state desire has been used as a tool for governing but desire also could be understood as a form of resistance. In that sense, desire could lead the necessity for sharing common knowledge making new social conditions visible.

This case studies have been chosen because of their relevance and since early 2000s they have been working to articulate a discourse against neoliberal policies, either from the creative industries or from social action; because they mention desire as a way to think political alternatives and because they are an example for the current exchange between critical art and social critique. Finally, because looking at these local tradition and its work for years is how today one can explain the success of the Spanish "Indignados" movement.

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one or more persons during a certain period drop their relations, their work and leisure activities, and all their other usual motives for movement and action, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there. Chance is a less important factor in this activity than one might think: from a *dérive* point of view, cities have psychogeographical contours, with constant currents, fixed points and vortexes that strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones". Situationists translated texts are available in the *Situationist International Anthology* at <http://www.bopsecrets.org/cat.htm>.

### ***Precarias a la deriva* – “The Desire for a Commons Not Yet Invented”**

*Precarias a la deriva*<sup>4</sup> (Precarious Women Workers Adrift) is a Madrid-based collective made up of women from a variety of social movements (e.g., feminism, the squatters' movement, the fight against racism, the workers' movement) that have recovered artistic avant-garde experiments such as the *situationist dérive*. In 2004, it described itself as follows: 'We were driven, especially, by the desire to learn as we went along, to communicate with each other along the way, to discover these new situations and realities of the precarious labour market and of a life working from experience: each of us sharing with and telling the others' (*Precarias a la deriva*, 2004: 17). *Precarias a la deriva* was founded to call attention to and share the full range of experiences emerging from this socio-economic model that occur when exploitative conditions are perpetuated in the context of intangible labour, that is, occupations linked both to the fields of creative industries and care work.

The collective was founded following the general strike in Spain on June 20, 2002. In the context of that strike, as with many others, the group became aware of the gap with the model of struggle embodied by strikes called by trade unions. The authors classified the differences around three main factors:

1. Failing to reflect (and this is nothing new) the experience of exploitation and unfair distribution of domestic and care workers, who are mostly women in the *non-productive sphere* of family and other coexistence units.
2. Excluding, as a result of the budgets and generally encouraged forms of action, certain increasingly widespread jobs that are generally considered to be precarious.
3. Completely ignoring the precarious, flexible, invisible and undervalued jobs that have become specifically feminized and/or are generally held by immigrants (sex work, domestic work, caring, customer service.).

In short, the June 20 strike highlighted the considerable ignorance surrounding the importance of non-productive domestic work and its irregular distribution, precarious and flexible work such as sex work, and care work, which goes beyond the domestic sphere (caring for seniors, but also customer service) and is mostly performed by document and undocumented women immigrants. As noted by the

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<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all translations are the authors' own.

collective, in the context of the transition to a service economy, this idea of labour as a *recreation of life* ends up confused with life itself, and the forms of domination (patriarchal and racial) are blurred.

Given the disorganized state of the people who would not be participating in the strike as a result of their irregular legal status, job insecurity, economic insecurity or social vulnerability, *Precarias a la deriva*, clearly drawing on Debordian Situationism, proposed *survey-pickets* instead of traditional pickets. The project was based on using the idea of drifting—moving through different sites in the city—to understand and map the life experiences of all those workers involved in intangible labour (communicators, translators, designers, etc.), sex work, and domestic work. These drifts through ‘physical and mental places’ (roads, homes, businesses, public transportation, supermarkets, bars, shops, union halls) were grounded in a clear and necessary objective given the lack of networks and shared notions to develop strategies of resistance. As noted by the members of *Precarias a la deriva* (2004: 83) themselves, the goal was to reposition these workers’ identities, to disrupt the mobility and precarization, placing them in atypical positions for their socioeconomic status, far removed from the forms of subjectivity in their normal living conditions and life styles. The drifts were designed to generate a participatory process with the interviewed subjects, an exchange of experiences, joint reflection and a record of everything seen and told in an effort to render it as tangible as possible (by means of photographs, videos, audio recordings, and written stories) (*Precarias a la deriva*, 2004: 25). Participants worked in the fields of telemarketing, translation and language teaching, hospitality and social nursing. These experiences were captured in a documentary film, *Precarias a la Deriva: A la Deriva por los Circuitos de la Precariedad*, with a Creative Commons (CC BY 2.5).<sup>5</sup> The method followed in those derives may be watched in the documentary. Interviewing several women, it show us both immigrants and workers related to creative industries (writers, filmmakers, actress, musicians) expressing their desire for dignity, their wishes of a better life in a new country or for a paid work. Talking about how they feel about their jobs, how their labour trajectories has been, is how that they make visible a transversal precarity. Along the interviews the need to talking about one’s self is constantly remarked; the need to mention feelings about future or labour constitutes similar ways of life

<sup>5</sup> Video available online through the Spanish video art distributor HAMACA: <http://www.hamacaonline.net/obra.php?id=237>.

determined by new economy model. In this sense, affection as has been explain before is playing an important role because vital circumstances serve to think about new forms of exploitation (unfair paid work, moonlighting, impossibility of work in own discipline, unstable labour conditions and lack of legal protection) are frequently related to women and reproduction of life.

### Social Action: ODSs – *Ferrocarril Clandestino*

The militant practices of *Precarias a la deriva* are mirrored in those of other organizations not directly involved in the arts but that borrow from many of the activist practices surrounding or stemming from the new forms of artistic institutional critique. One such organization is the ODS (*oficina de derechos sociales* or social rights office). ODSs are found throughout Spain in different neighbourhoods of the country’s largest cities, such as Madrid, Barcelona, Seville and Malaga. The purpose of these offices is to offer a common support and action network able to combat housing, employment and social problems with specific tools. For example, the Madrid-based ODS *Ferrocarril Clandestino* (Underground Railroad), in response to European migration policy and the Spanish Immigration Act (*Ley de Extranjería*), offers a space for support between Spaniards and documented immigrants and undocumented immigrants with the aim of forging bonds and partnerships to overcome the situation of extreme vulnerability in which the latter find themselves when they first arrive in the city.

The benchmark for these ODSs was the French case in which, in the context of the immigration law imposed by Sarkozy (restricting the possibilities of obtaining a residence permit and enabling the deportation of children whose asylum requests were denied), a network was organized to oppose what it considered to be an assault on human rights themselves: members sponsored children, hosted them in their houses, protested at schools to impede expulsions and created a “genuine community network of lawful disobedience.”

Such mutual assistance networks can offer residence, registration, support, child care, the translation of documents, provide information on free resources for meeting basic needs, legal advice, and free language courses, and organize a common dialogue through the network itself or by means of conferences or social media for sharing ideas and thoughts to create new strategies.



According to Marta Malo (2004), a social researcher and member of the *Ferrocarril Clandestino*, all of these social networks aimed at transforming the present state of affairs engage in a wealth of experiments, searches between thought, action and articulation, initiatives intended to break ideological filters and inherited frameworks (e.g., the labour movement's 'subject' or the worker's own identity), the production of knowledge through the concrete analysis of life, cooperation, and the sharing of experiences of discomfort in order to turn all this knowledge into a practical strength. Facts that are very connected to the sense of Haraway's situated knowledge.

As Malo explains in the preface to *Nociones comunes* (2004: 13-40), a compilation of militant experiences, the sources of inspiration for this course of action are based on past experiences such as the worker inquiries and co-research used and transformed by Italian intellectuals and activists (Romano Alquati and Danilo Montaldi in 1956-1957, creators of the *Unità di Proletaria* group, contributors to journals such as *Quaderni Rossi* and to the French group *Socialisme ou Barbarie*), guided by their desire to call attention to the behaviours, traditions and rejection of workers at work. It likewise draws on the notion of the subjective insertion of the researcher in the field of study and the active role of the respondent participating in such a way as to be jointly responsible for the research process, in addition to the experiences of women's groups focused on raising self-awareness and feminist epistemology.

This practice, first seen in American feminist groups of the 1960s, such as the New York Radical Women, consisted of enabling women to pool, through group gatherings, their own diverse experiences, without the mediation of an ideological narrative, so as to build from within and for themselves a shared political discourse based on their own lives and everyday experience. The institutional analysis conducted in France by figures such as Felix Guattari, the journal *Recherches* and the FGERI (*Fédération des groupes d'études et de recherches institutionnelles* or Federation of Groups for Institutional Study and Research) in the 1960s until the crucial turning point of 1968 (when anti-psychiatry and school-free education were embraced) emerged, first, to recognize the false neutrality of the analyst or teacher and the "fact that any and all analytical or educational projects involve an intervention" and second, to "free the social word, the collective expression of a politics of desire,

by involving each and every one of an institution's members in the institutional analysis" (Malo, 2004: 27). *Participatory action-research* emerged in the late 1970s in response to R&D departments and was particularly popular in Latin America, and in relation to the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire, also broke with the usual subject-object relationships between researchers and the researched, encouraging action and co-research.

Moving on to the field of cultural and artistic production, many groups and platforms, given their political objectives, have incorporated into their practice this type of co-active networking with the local community including, among others, neighbourhood associations, community centres', associations of the unemployed and of people struggling to pay their mortgages, and cooperative movements (e.g., *Cooperativa Integral Catalana*). In this context, mention should be made of *Arquitecturas colectivas* (Collective Architectures), a network of architects, artists and collectives working in urban areas (hackers, urban planners, activists or architects), which provides an enabling framework for collaboration on different types of projects and initiatives. The collective's website proposes tools for undertaking these kinds of projects based on collective participation and also openly offers a map of the different working groups and activities, classified into three lines: a research group on the mapping of collectives, processes, resources and conflicts; a research group on legal aspects and the production of related guides; and a research group on collective processes related to housing. The platform brings together and offers its members and related groups access to artistic collectives such as *Todo por la praxis*,<sup>6</sup> *Zuloark*,<sup>7</sup> *Basurama*<sup>8</sup> and *Paisaje Transversal*.<sup>9</sup>

Attention should also be drawn to other activities embedded in the cultural context in which

6 The group is defined as a "laboratory of aesthetic projects of cultural resistance, a laboratory that develops tools for intervention in the public space, with the ultimate goal of generating a catalog of tools for socially effective direct action aimed at achieving the right to housing and the right to the city." <http://www.todoporlapraxis.es/>

7 Collective Zuloark is 'an anarchitectural network of students, professionals, offices, etc. It is a rhizome, it is not hierarchical and it is a LABEL that can be freely used.' <http://www.zuloark.org/>

8 Basurama, founded in 2001, is a group dedicated to cultural research, production and management whose specific area of study and performance is production processes, the waste they generate, and the creative possibilities thereof. <http://www.basurama.org/>

9 This group defines itself as a platform to work on new models of urban management from a participatory and transdisciplinary perspective. <http://www.paisajetransversal.org/>

members of *Ferrocarril Clandestino* (Marta Malo and Débora Ávila) have participated. One such collaboration took place within the framework of the Seville-based Zemos98 festival, a platform dedicated to free culture, videoart, networking, expanded education and technological mediation, as well as experimentation with content and formats ([www.zemos98.org](http://www.zemos98.org)). The 14th edition, held in 2012, was specifically entitled *Copylove: commons, love and remix*. The aim was to analyze the role of feelings and emotions in communities. This idea was based on the notion that, since the community (understood as a group of actors and agents that work to generate collective benefits) has come to be an essential factor in contemporary cultural production (e.g., in the development of free culture), excessive emphasis can be placed on how legal protocols determine the community's production. Under excessive legal determinism, movements such as the free culture movement have embraced copyleft licenses. This has obscured the role that feelings and care work have in community practices. This is the context in which the Copylove project was held. The project took the form of residences in February, March and April in which, following a public call for proposals, different art collectives or social activism groups, worked together to create a related conceptual map of the areas that Copylove would investigate and to create a series of participatory practices to share the management and optimization of the community's constituent bonds. The festival program partially took place during the residences, and different actors (*Ferrocarril Clandestino*, Guillermo Zapata of Patio Maravillas, Mabel Cañadas of Lakabe) were invited to explain their experiences.

### **Bio-syndicate: For Those of Us Who Enjoy Working**

It is interesting to see how these processes of self-inquiry and militant research are being incorporated into proposals in the Spanish cultural context. In 2010, a small consortium of political and cultural organizations including Traficantes de Sueños (dreams dealers), YProductions, the Universidad Nómada and the Universidad Invisible of Malaga organized the conference "For Those of Us Who Enjoy Working: Workshops on Precariousness and Self-organization in 'Creative' Work," held at the Traficantes de Sueños bookstore. The purpose of these workshops was to attempt a critique of the current conditions of so-called cultural production, as well as to produce original thinking on the role and shape of cultural institutions, based on the views and

experiences of a variety of stakeholders: companies and associations of artists whose main clients are public institutions, as well as cultural associations and companies more focused on the private market; companies and political projects related in one way or another to the production of cultural goods; collectives of creators of social centres, both leased and in squats; open-source software development and graphic design companies; and different officials and directors of museums and cultural institutions.

Contrary to what was happening with the implementation of 'creative city' policies in places such as Madrid, Barcelona or Malaga, the organizers found a clear difference between the promised benefits and the actual status of the cultural agents and workers: the so-called creative economic model is based on the privatization of ideas and their enclosure in brands without any returns for the fountainhead that generated them. Hence the project to create the right dynamics to establish a common front to defend the rights of the 'grassroots cultural community' that ultimately feeds cities' creative watersheds.

To this end, a second activity was planned, open to participation by this cultural community, this time hosted by the Reina Sofia National Museum and Art Center and billed as a *conference for listening*. Drawing on the precedents of militant research, it was proposed that there not be predefined discussion topics. The starting point was the aforementioned framework of neoliberal subjectivity, which brought together a wide range of agents involved in cultural work: because "being able to do what you want" makes it worth the effort and because the working conditions are understood to result from personal choice as opposed to the alternative of a 'Fordist' type of job (a lifetime position with fixed hours and duties). Not being confined to a single occupation, not selling out, not having to adapt to the constraints of an institution, devoting all of one's efforts to what really 'fulfills you' in many cases justifies accepting precarious and temporary jobs (or creating a micro-enterprise or association subject to these same conditions).

Based on this common space, the goal was to carry out a collective self-analysis, a critical exercise evaluating the series of strengths and weaknesses to be used to build a minimum vocabulary shared by the workers to deal with situations of precariousness, exploitation, dispossession and trivialization of the importance of their work, as well as to think of forms of self-organization in the sector.

Once again, the tools here were self-inquiries and co-research conducted following public lectures that served as a framework. The workshops between the guests and participants were divided into three columns or levels: personal, situational and structural. These three lines used to organize the different working groups were then further divided into the following stages: first, the 'identification of the main problems in the sector'; second, 'the search for solutions'; and third, the 'selection of proposals and creation of working groups' to ensure the work would continue.

The most relevant working groups seemed to be: 1) 'Cartographies,' tasked with investigating the flow of money and jobs and relationships between smallholders, large companies and institutions in the sector; 2) 'Cultural Meetings,' to serve as an annual meet-up for the sector, akin to the well-known hack meetings; 3) "'Association/Complaint/Union,' a group dedicated to testing a possible strategy of organizing and conflict; 4) 'Web Tools,' envisioned as a virtual forum for sharing resources and knowledge, as well as complaints and warnings with regard to specific companies and institutions with bad practices; and 5) specific workshops on various issues, such as group dynamics, finance, public policy, production relationships, commons, and professional liability. These groups were not formally set up at the meeting; only lists were made with the email addresses of interested parties.

Nevertheless, these workshops were given continuity in the form of similar subsequent processes. Such was the case of events like 'Mulling Over Cultural Production,' organized in Madrid by the Madrid-based *Atravesadas por la cultura* (Pierced by Culture) platform, 'Places of Cultural and Creative Industries,' 'Who's Afraid of Cultural Workers?' and 'Institutions of the Commons.' At those events, there was talk of creating a bio-syndicate, something to be present in all dynamics aimed at generating common notions and that would go beyond the cultural context, calling for new ways to organize invisible workers, workers with abusive contracts, temporary workers, and people denied basic labour rights, interns and volunteers. In short, the goal was to go beyond the classical concept of a union in order to seek methods of action in keeping with the so-called *precariat*. We are thus talking about a union that would suit not workers covered by a wage system at companies, but rather those affected by job insecurity also called

intermittency<sup>10</sup>. As Franco Ingrassia (2005: 63) has written:

This factory worker was struggling against domination understood as the fixing of the body to a place and task. In contrast, the precarious worker struggles against a very different form of domination: instability. This employment instability has its correlate outside work: social dispersion. Under the conditions of a stable structure, the militant's tasks were to break, deny, and subvert the regulations. Under conditions of social dispersion, the militant's tasks are to create independent means of cohesion and of recombining the resources and human ties that are constantly threatening to escape, to disperse.

## Conclusions

The various cases mentioned show how a series of tools and methodologies developed by social movements have been transformed into artistic practices in the form of projects closely related to relational aesthetics, performance art or happenings, drawing on the Situationist tradition, in which the precedents of militant research come to form a part of the political practice itself. In the opposite direction, it has been shown how nowadays assuming some artistic tools (drift, imagining new communities, and use of political art) is still a recurrent innovative practice to social critique. Alternatively, these militant research practices can constitute a battery of very useful resources for thinking about the precarious conditions of cultural workers under policies aimed at promoting creative cities through the creative industries. A link can thus be seen between two different areas: first, agents working in the arts who give their practice a political undertone and are enriched by this background of militancy; and, second, agents, groups and collectives active in social movements and political causes who come into contact with artistic contexts and cultural spaces.

<sup>10</sup> It is worth mentioning here one of the pioneer platforms in the articulation of these precepts in France in 2003, *Les intermittents du spectacle* (<http://www.intermittent-spectacle.fr>), which grew to considerable size. The victims comprised a hundred thousand people from the tertiary sector, specifically; people linked via discontinuous engagements to the cultural and entertainment industry and entitled to unemployment benefits if they worked 507 hours a year.

But the New Economy model based on the economization of culture and the culturalization of economic is accompanied by a large group of vulnerable and invisible workers non-related to creative industries. They are a necessary support for the social structure taking charge of life reproduction (care work). Not only the precarious condition is the common node between different social groups today, but we have also seen how in the searching for a new common place non-rational thinking is taken into account. In all these platforms, we can find factors related to the role of affectivity and desires as key elements in the social production of subjectivity and the basis for the creation of a collective space for resisting and critiquing new social conditions' framework. It is precisely in these forms of organization via support networks, cooperation networks and community self-organizing in which an antagonistic notion of emotion comes into play rejecting management literature: love, fear, hope and desire to share or dignity-.

On the one hand, the large influence of the post-structuralism tradition over social movements and artistic militancy could be assumed. Irrational elements are key factors to sustain communities, either in a knowledge industry or in a social centre. It seems that nowadays it is urgent to recover the community myth problem. Seen through the historical bases, we could establish connection between the romanticist critical discourses and the praxis of current social movements. The case studies show the relation between desire of political belonging and the fact of language, common vocabulary, life experiences' narratives, inner desires, shared feelings. As noted by Fichte, these groups are pointing out modern governmentality elements such as desire to generate social critique. On the other hand, connecting again with the failure of liberalism during the late nineteenth century, is now necessary a debate towards community and its relation to the sense of commons.

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