Art, Agency and Eco-Politics: Rethinking Urban Subjects and Environment(s)

Duncan Cook

Doctor of Philosophy

Royal College of Art

March 2014

Copyright Statement

Abstract

This research aims to examine the extent to which cultural agency can be seen to 'act' in an eco-political context and how its operations urge a rethinking of the processes that govern the production of urban subjects and environment(s). Responding to the fact that in recent decades, art and architectural cultures have converged around a shared concern for 'ecological matters' and that discourses in visual/spatial culture have become increasingly 'ecologized', this research broadens the points of reference for the term 'ecology' beyond that which simply reinforces an essentialist perspective on 'nature'.

The thesis re-directs the focus of current theoretical discourse on 'ecological art' towards a more rigorous engagement with its frames of reference and how it uses them to evaluate the role of cultural production in enacting ways of thinking and acting eco-logically. In doing so it develops an eco-logical mode of analysis for mapping and probing the attribution of cultural agency, how it intervenes in the production of the commons and how it discloses the participants and mechanisms of a nascent political ecology. Setting cultural agency within a more expansive and multivalent field of action, means that the nexus of agency (and intentionality) is dislocated and translated between 'things'. Reconfigured in this way, 'an ecology of agencing' demonstrates the profound implications this has for any 'bodies' of action, cultural or otherwise.

Locating this exploration within the socio-natural environment(s) found in urban spatialities this thesis attends to the relatively under-theorised, but highly significant area (in eco-logical terms) of aesthetic praxis operating at the interstices of art and architecture. Pressing at the boundaries of the formal and conceptual enterprises of both disciplines, critical spatial practices represent a distinctive form of eco-praxis being cultivated 'on the ground'. Through a series of encounters with its operations this research looks to the ways in which practice and theory, in relation to the question of ecology, are becoming increasingly co-constituted.

Contents

The opening chapter begins by situating a discussion of cultural agency within a broader definition of 'ecology', in order to encompass human *and* society relations. Surveying the impact of post-natural thought and new materialisms on our conceptions of 'environment' and the role of material agencies I locate subsequent chapters within the dynamics of urban spatialities.   In doing so agency or attempts to 'think' and 'act' ecologically are considered in the specific context of critical spatial practices, it is these trans-disciplinary operations that I argue are often uniquely positioned and disposed to explore the eco-logical territories of our urban spatialities.

This chapter examines the principle theoretical frameworks that exist for understanding the mechanisms of human agency in both spatial and eco-logical terms. Weaving together existing ideas of a relational and networked agency at work in socio-spatial assemblages with those who advocate an active material agency, this chapter positions cultural agency within a highly contested process that is distributed and mediated across a diverse collective of 'actors'. Formulating 'an Ecology of Agencing' this chapter seeks to develop a method with which we might begin to map the complex agential geography that spatial practices reveal, transform and extend.

Chapter 3 – Acts of Commoning

This chapter shifts focuses onto the agential mechanisms of cultural production in respect to their capacity to influence new conceptions and new formations of urban commons. Working on, and testing concepts such as 'public' realm', 'common interest' and commonality, such forms of praxis are an important indicator of how such provisional concepts can become synchronized with the changing distributions, administrations, transformations and agencies of material resources as they circulate in urban spatialities.

Chapter 4 – Ecological Assemblies   Page 198-263

This final chapter considers what role cultural production might play in disclosing the controversies surfacing in a nascent political ecology. Extending the idea that the urban commons is a site or forum in which we attempt to articulate and actualize other ways of thinking and being 'in common' or create spaces for precipitating other 'forms of life', examples of critical spatial practices are examined from the perspective of their capacity to formulate ecological assemblies that elicit more distributed forms of democratic process.

List of Illustrations

1. FlyingCity *Power of Cheonggyecheon* (2003) Source: FlyingCity http://flyingcity.kr

2. FlyingCity *Drifting Producers Diagram of Production Line of Metal Workshops in Cheonggyecheon area* (2003) Source: Yong-seok, Jeon (2007) 'Drifting Producers' in Art and Social Change: A Critical Reader Bradley, W. and Esche, C. (eds.) (2007) London: Tate Publishing and Afterall, pp.396-377

3. FlyingCity *Talkshow Tents* (2003) Source: FlyingCity http://flyingcity.kr

4. FlyingCity *All Things Park* (2003) Source: FlyingCity http://flyingcity.kr

5. *Cheonggyecheon Restoration Project* (2001), river views of Zones 1-3, Source: http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110118095356/http:/www.cabe.org.uk/case-studies/cheonggyecheon-restoration-project?photos=true

6. Kelvin Kyung Kun Park *Cheonggyecheon Medley: a Dream of Iron* (2010)Source: http://www.hancinema.net/hancinema-s-film-review-cheonggyecheon-medley-a-dream-of-iron-33127.html and http://cinema-architecture.blogspot.co.uk/2011/05/2011-los-angeles-film-festival_11.html

7. Gaye Chan and Nandita Sharma *Eating in Public* (2003) Source: http://www.nomoola.com

8. Gaye Chan and Nandita Sharma *Eating in Public* (2003) Source: http://www.nomoola.com

9. Fallen Fruit *Public Fruit* and *Public Fruit Map* (2004) Source: Fallen Fruit http://fallenfruit.org

10. Fallen Fruit *Public Fruit Map,* Linz (2008) and *Who Owns the Fruit* (2008)Source: Fallen Fruit http://fallenfruit.org

11. Fallen Fruit *Nocturnal Fruit Forages* (2004 ongoing) Source: Burns, David, Viegener, Matias and Young, Austin, Fallen Fruit http://fallenfruit.org

12. Fallen Fruit *Public Fruit Jam* (2004 ongoing) Source: Fallen Fruit http://fallenfruit.org

13. ThisLandYourLand *Temporary Kitchen* (2012) Source: Courtesy of the artists

14. ThisLandYourLand *Temporary Kitchen* (2012) Source: Courtesy of the artists

15. Ambulante Construções Group *Vacant lots, Belo Horizonte* (2004) Source: Ganz, Louise and Silva, Breno (2009) Lotos Vagos: Ocupações Experimentais / Vacant Lots: Experimental Occupations Belo Horzonte. BR: Instituto Cidades Criativas ICC

16. Ambulante Construções Group *Mapping vacant lots, Belo Horizonte* (2004) Source: Espaços Colaterais / Collateral Spaces Campos, A et al Belo Horzonte. BR: Instituto Cidades Criativas ICC

17. Ambulante Construções Group *Mapping vacant lots, Belo Horizonte* (2004) Source: Ganz, Louise and Silva, Breno (2009) Lotos Vagos: Ocupações Experimentais / Vacant Lots: Experimental Occupations Belo Horzonte. BR: Instituto Cidades Criativas ICC

18. Ambulante Construções Group *Vacant Lots, Perimeter* (2005) Source: Ganz, Louise and Silva, Breno (2009) Lotos Vagos: Ocupações Experimentais / Vacant Lots: Experimental Occupations Belo Horzonte. BR: Instituto Cidades Criativas ICC

19. Ambulante Construções Group *Project sites for Vacant Lots, Belo Horizonte* (2004) Source: Ganz, Louise and Silva, Breno (2009) Lotos Vagos: Ocupações Experimentais / Vacant Lots: Experimental Occupations Belo Horzonte. BR: Instituto Cidades Criativas ICC

20. Ambulante Construções Group *Vacant Lots, 100m² of Grass* (2005) Source: Espaços Colaterais / Collateral Spaces Campos, A et al Belo Horzonte. BR: Instituto Cidades Criativas ICC

21. Ambulante Construções Group *Vacant Lots, Topography* (2006) Source: Espaços Colaterais / Collateral Spaces Campos, A et al Belo Horzonte. BR: Instituto Cidades Criativas ICC

22. Ambulante Construções Group *Kits Ambulante* (Ambulant Kits) (2009-11) Source: http://kitsambulantes.blogspot.com.br/

23. Ambulante Construções Group *Kits Ambulante*(Ambulant Kits) (2009-11) Source: http://kitsambulantes.blogspot.com.br/

24. *Devir Menor (Becoming Minor: On Architecture and Emerging Spatial Projects in Ibero-America)* Guimarães (2012) Source: Devir Menor http://www.devirmenor2012guimaraes.com

25. Ambulante Construções Group *Typical vacant lots, Belo Horizonte* (2004) Source: Ganz, Louise and Silva, Breno (2009) Lotos Vagos: Ocupações Experimentais / Vacant Lots: Experimental Occupations Belo Horzonte. BR: Instituto Cidades Criativas ICC

26. Breno Silva and Louise Ganz – *A.E.T (Ativador de Espacialidades Temporárias – Temporary Spatialities Activator)* (2012-13) Source: Courtesy of the artists

27. Atelier d'architecture autogeree (aaa) *Mechanics of Fluids* (2005) Source: Urban Clearance http://www.urbanclearance.co.uk/projects1.htm

28. Atelier d'architecture autogeree (aaa) *ECObox project* (2001 onwards) Source: Urban Tactics http://www.urbantactics.org/projects/ecobox/ecobox.html and Emergencity Urban Interventions and Research http://emergencity.net/atelier-darchitecture-autogeree/

29. Atelier d'architecture autogeree (aaa) ECObox project (2001 onwards) Source: Emergencity Urban Interventions and Research http://emergencity.net/atelier-darchitecture-autogeree/

30. Atelier d'architecture autogeree (aaa) ECObox project (2001 onwards) Source: Urban Tactics http://www.urbantactics.org/projects/ecobox/ecobox.html

Acknowledgements

Author's Declaration

During the period of registered study in which this thesis was prepared the author has not been registered for any other academic award or qualification. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

Signature　　　　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

Date　　　　　　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

Introduction

Given that 'life' in the broadest eco-logical terms at least, is something which describes nature-society relations, envisioning a sphere of entities, activities and processes that can no longer be neatly contained or policed within a distinctly social realm; it has become expedient for critical discourses on the question of art and life to attend to the demands of this dis-location between 'nature' and 'culture'. In common with many other research projects my own has emerged from a growing sense that something different is 'in the air', or that there is a question that needs to be addressed. For me this has been prompted by the propensity found in a wide range of disciplines including philosophy, social theory, geography, urban studies, and most significantly the visual arts, to locate some of its most significant current debates and challenges in the arena of the 'eco-logical'. In my research the question of whether it has become necessary and vital for critical discourses on the question of art and life to attend to the demands of this dis-location quickly evolved into an examination of how we might begin to think art and agency differently from an eco-logical perspective on 'life', and within the wider context of eco-politics. Hence, the compounding of the terms 'art', 'agency' and 'eco-politics' found in the title of this research, is my attempt to highlight the interconnectivity between this 'hub' of ideas and to find a way to re-frame our thinking about the interactions between culture and nature seen through the specific lens of aesthetic praxis. In the course of my writing I move from the notion of agency to the process of 'agencing'. This term is, for me, more useful as it carries with it a view of action or change that is collectively produced rather than authorial in origin, distributed and mediated across an array of actors. Furthermore it is orientated towards the ethical, alluding to the need to balance the equal power of agents and to formulate a constitutional fairness between 'things'.

My desire to open up such a line of enquiry reflects my ongoing interest in the varying trajectories of eco-logical thought that have radiated from the disciplinary fields of philosophy, critical theory, feminism and geography, and the ways in which these discourses have given additional momentum

to a now expanding range of literature from a rapidly 'ecologizing' visual culture. These trajectories of eco-centric writings have in their own ways made significant contributions to the erosion of the anthropocentric notion that 'nature' and 'culture' can be conceived of as mutually exclusive territories. My investment in these discourses is therefore in a large part motivated by a desire to seek ways in which the writing of cultural production, in particular cultural agency might be reinvigorated, as the territories of culture and nature are being re-plotted. On another level my investment in trajectories of thought coming from outside the field of visual culture has emerged from their capacity to enable a rethinking of the ways in which urban subjects and environment(s) are being produced in ecological space. This aspect of inter-disciplinary scholarship is something that I believe cultural labour (both practice and theory) should be cognisant of, as it probes, infiltrates and intersects with the social and political realities of urban spatialities.

My interest in the eco-logical is thus filtered through a particular concern: chiefly what impact does the imbrication of the territories of the 'natural' and the 'social' into a single complex 'ecology' have for our understanding of the operations of cultural agency, operations that have in recent decades manifested themselves in forms of aesthetic praxis that are often termed as 'socially', 'spatially' or 'ecologically' orientated? This thesis thus attempts to re-direct the focus of current theoretical discourse in visual culture on 'ecological art' towards a more rigorous engagement with its frames of reference and how it uses them to evaluate the role of cultural production in processes of agencing, or enacting ways of thinking and acting eco-logically, especially in urban space. Responding to the fact that in recent years, art and architectural cultures have converged around a shared concern for 'ecological matters' and that discourses in the visual arts and spatial culture have become increasingly 'ecologized', this research broadens the points of reference for the term 'ecology' beyond that which simply reinforces an essentialist perspective on 'nature' to posit ecology as an articulation of the permeable and overlapping boundaries between nature *and* society. Thinking processes of change 'ecologically' therefore locates agency in a highly complex over-determination between 'natural' and social actors and urges a rethinking of the ways in which we understand the

role and reach of cultural agency. This research therefore sets out to examine what is at stake when forms of cultural agency intersect and interact with(in) the complex spatial ecologies that constitute contemporary urban environment(s), to explore the question of how cultural agency can be seen to 'act' in an eco-political context.

The research is advanced through three interconnected aims:

- The first is to extend current thinking about cultural agency through a critical engagement with relational, networked and ultimately ecological mechanisms of agency, drawing on and developing existing discourse in the field of visual arts and spatial cultures by eliciting productive encounters with inter-disciplinary scholarship from the fields of post-structural geographies and socio-political theory. The purpose of extending thinking in this way is to establish a discursive mode or a methodology, through which we might better recognise the attenuated and potentially enhanced condition of cultural agency. In doing so I will argue that establishing an eco-logical mode of analysis or what I will later refer to as 'an Ecology of Agencing' is vital if we are to successfully map and probe the attribution of cultural agency. By setting cultural agency within a more expansive and multivalent field of action or ecology, means that the nexus of agency (and intentionality) is dislocated and translated between 'things'. Reconfigured in this way, 'an Ecology of Agencing' demonstrates the profound implications this has for any 'bodies' of action, cultural or otherwise.

- The second aim is to examine the specific ways in which an 'Ecology of Agencing' is constituted through the complex interactions and contestations that result from the production and distribution of the commons. Arguing that the urban commons is forged from both 'natural' and 'virtual' substances, the meeting point of 'matter' and human matters, I seek to demonstrate how forms of aesthetic praxis and cultural activism carry out diverse 'acts of commoning'. It is these acts that can routinely undo the neat divisions between a 'natural' and 'virtual' conception of the commons, pointing to an entanglement

of material and cultural agencies at work on the formation of contingent 'publics' and contingent forms of commonality.

- The third aim of this research is to explore how, within the particular context of urban spatialities, material and cultural agencies can cohere into ecological assemblies that disclose the emerging properties and mechanisms of a nascent political ecology. Arguing that such assemblies are a means of testing the limits of urban governance and the efficacy of a distributed form of democratic principle, I aim to outline some of the ways in which spatial practices found at the interstices of art and architecture are finding new spaces, strategies and 'actors' with which they might develop experimental forums for thinking and acting 'being in common'.

Methodology

It is important to state from the outset that my methodological approach is indebted to the critical, philosophical and socio-political approaches to the writing of visual culture that have developed since the 1960s. These approaches that have variously drawn on Marxist, feminist, post-structural and post-colonial critiques have been vital in enabling a form of discourse in visual culture to emerge that situates its critique of cultural production in the context of the changing politics, socio-economics, geographies, and wider discourses of the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries, (Deutsche (1996), Mirzoeff (ed.) (1998) Evans and Hall (1999), Rogoff (2000), Miles (2004), Rendell (2006), Bradley and Esche (eds.) (2007), Raunig (2007), Stimson, and Sholette (eds.) (2007).

Collectively these approaches have enabled me to identify and articulate the contingent nature of artistic production and recognise the potential social role of discourses/dialogues in art to make visible operations of power through a critical engagement with the politics of representation and cultural agency. In the light of these crucial developments, I have, as a writer operating in the field of visual culture continued this effort by drawing from very particular examples and challenges raised by a broad group of scholars, some from my own field, and some of whom are working in

disciplines outside of visual culture, such as philosophy, feminism, political science, geography, and urban theory.

Some of the most important trajectories of thought for my own project have come from those thinkers operating in and across critical discourses in eco-philosophy, new materialisms, bio-politics and post-structural geographies. At the centre of much of this thought is an ongoing engagement with the legacy of Marxist philosophy, the implications of post-humanism/post-naturalism and the affirmation of new feminist ontologies. These distinctive discursive modes have had a significant part to play in shaping my own thinking and setting the perimeters of my own project within the eco-centric and post-Marxist traditions of post-structuralist thought.

In seeking to identify the significance of the 'environment' in post-structuralist thinking Verena Andermatt Conley's influential text (1997) represents a seminal discussion of the eco-political projects formulated by post 1968 philosophers and cultural theorists , and as such it is a text that has exerted an appreciable influence on my own project. In it Conley claims that through the writings of some of its key exponents Michel Serres, Felix Guattari, Michel de Certeau post-structural thought maintained a close affiliation with 'ecology', and female scholars, such as Helene Cixious and Luce Irigary in particular, sought to examine the potential for connecting post-structuralist assertions of the multiplicity of meaning found in language with the notion of the permeability and multiplicity of identity formation and modes of (in)habitation. Feminist theory has therefore been particularly instructive in demonstrating the extent to which 'nature' is both a semiotic and material construction. In the context of competing Eco-feminisms the most significant contributions and influence in the context of my own writing has come from those thinkers who have questioned the differentiation and separation of 'nature' and 'culture' into an antithetical (non)relation and from those who have troubled the processes and implications of 'othering' nature (Soper (1995), Haraway (1994).

Kate Soper has been instrumental in both respects, by troubling the condition of nature as something that denotes both a human produced concept (with multiple meanings), and a group of physical 'things' and phenomena that constitute our milieu. The problem Soper highlights is that 'an *a priori* discrimination between humanity and 'nature' is implicit in all the relations between the two', this she claims results in 'nature' becoming 'the idea through which we conceptualize what is 'other' to ourselves' (Soper 1994 p.15-16). In a similar way Donna Haraway's intellectual project, characterised as an attempt to break down the ontological separation of 'nature' and 'culture', is an important disruption to the 'things' that we commonly assume to be self-evidently 'natural', a process that she has previously described as the 'queering of what counts as nature' (1994: p.60).

Constructing a form of eco-criticism which problematizes the position of 'nature' as culture's 'other' has given feminist thinkers greater scope to expand critical debates about the self-evidence of sexual identities, the 'body' and the subject/object relation (Barad (1996), Grosz (2005) and Bennett (2010). It is the capacity demonstrated by eco-feminism to radically redraw ontology into spaces of the 'other', both 'other' subjects and 'other' (material) agencies that I attempt to reconfigure in the context of the material and social agencies mobilised by forms of cultural production that intersect and interact with the complex socio-natural compositions of urban spatialities.

Another significant aspect of my methodology has come from the new perspectives on 'nature' and society found in recent thinking from the left, in particular the work of post-Marxist cultural geographers such as Smith (1984), Harvey (1996), Heynan, Kaika, and Swyngedouw (eds.) (2006). Smith (1984) establishing a distinct variant of Marxist thought, has argued against the deeply entrenched notion that nature, or 'first nature' as a version of a pristine untouched nature, should be seen as external to society. Instead he claims that it is more productive to recognise that, just as society is fashioned from the ceaselessly creative capacities of natural processes, 'nature' is remade and remodelled from dynamic social change. The danger of creating a duality between the two is that the environment becomes viewed as something non-social, this frames 'nature' as something

that has to be either preserved or managed. Such a framing 'or the ideology of nature' as Smith termed it (1984, p.1) conceals the complex relationships between society and nature and risks overlooking the power structures and social inequities that are intrinsically tied to our interactions and transformations of our physical environment. In this particular formulation of political ecology the notion of 'nature' as external to society is therefore rejected in favour of an one defined by the internal relations between society and nature. In this conception social processes are ecological processes and ecological processes are social processes, each acting on the other (Harvey 1996). For Harvey what comes to constitute the particular human and non-human 'things' that make up this socio-natural imbroglio can be attributed to the overarching processes that give shape to the phenomena of our contemporary 'life-world'. In his treatment 'social natures' are the result of the dominant processes of capitalist accumulation. In this process the social and the natural are woven into deeply imbricated socio-natural networks circulating as commodities or operating as the channels through which capital can flow and expand. Thus 'nature' becomes subject to the logic of capital, albeit in ways that are not always predictable or desirable, at times assisting its expansion and at others contradicting or threatening it. Following on from such work Heynan, Kaika, and Swyngedouw (2006) have asserted the idea that social and ecological processes 'co-determine each other', such a shift has significant repercussions for our understanding of the power geometries at work in social natures and the kind of actors/actants entangled in such processes (2006: p.11).

Evident in both attempts by Feminist thinkers to carve out new ontological territory and the efforts made by post-Marxist geographers to account for the dominant processes that shape the environment in which we live, are two of the most crucial strands of post-structural thought that have permeated my own writing. The first is the desire to address questions of multiplicity, the second the imbrication of materiality in power mechanisms. Both of these concerns reverberate in recent discourses on relational space and relational agency, discourses that have informed and helped formulate my own project (Law and Hassard (1999), Latour (2005) and Massey (2005).

Relational or networked thinking has proliferated in a number of competing accounts of socio-spatial relations (Mol and Law (1994), Thrift (1996), Murdoch (1997) and Massey (2005). One of the most influencial and controversial being Latourian 'actor-networks' whose focus is on tracing the connections between 'things' as opposed to studying society from macro or micro perspectives, actor-network theory (ANT) proposes that action (and space) are constructed from relations of different types. Significantly for its proponents this means establishing a more symmetrical perspective on 'who' or 'what' is deemed to actively contribute to processes of associative action. Some thinkers however have argued that what ANT, in its preoccupation with network builders renders uncertain or risks leaving unexamined is those 'actors' who are routinely marginalised from the relations that constitute action or space (Massey (1993), Haraway (1997). In this respect both feminism and post-Marxist though can offer important correctives to this problem and in what follows I draw upon their perspectives to expound the central idea that cultural agency, as read through critical spatial practices, can generate important testing grounds for counter-normative associative action and formations of common worlds cultivated from heterogeneous arrays of actors.

Research Design

The design of my research is undertaken following an exploratory research method, this method is adopted due to the nature of the study. An exploratory method of research is employed as it provides insights into, and comprehension of a problem that is not pre-determined by an overarching theory. My strategy as a researcher is to adopt a position of reflexivity to the material looking to the ways in which theory and praxis interact, transform, and at times present distinct challenges to one another, and to consider how each contribute to a new set of findings about an agential geography mapped between diverse 'bodies' of action, cultural and otherwise. The research is therefore undertaken through a two stage process of analysis, beginning with a critical examination of existent literatures followed by detailed and comparative explorations of specific

cases studies. The rationale for such a design is that it enables a dialogue between theory and practice to be established, also it demonstrates, by way of the proximity of the material, the ways in which eco-theories and eco-praxes are held together in a relationship of co-constitution, each informing and feeding back on the other.

The research utilises qualitative research methods at both stages. The opening chapters set out a series of extensive readings of historical and contemporary spatial, political and ecological literatures to identify the key terms and controversies for defining ecology, agency and eco-subjects. A substantive reading of the concept of 'ecological art' and the somewhat overlooked ecological register of critical spatial practice is also undertaken at this stage, critically examining existent literatures from both art and architectural cultures. Subsequent chapters focus on a qualitative exploration of a range of selected case studies these allow for an in-depth investigation of a single group, or event as well as facilitating comparative work between examples. The use of descriptive case studies is particularly important to the study in that they actively contribute to the theoretical analysis. Giving particular attention to projects that emerge at the interstices of art and architecture in the form of 'critical spatial practices' the selection of case studies prioritises those that share a proximity to distinct socio-natural (an ecological) conditions and relations. The case study is therefore an important tool for examining the specificity of space as everyday practiced place (see Rendell 2006) and as a means of interrogating the meanings of artistic, architectural and cultural praxis, and the contexts in which they operate, simultaneously (see Mörtenböck and Mooshammer 2008).

Although it must be conceded that the selection of a small number of case studies only ever represents a partial view they are particular useful for analysing the meanings attributed to a particular set of actions within a particular site, by both the initiators and participants of longer term situated cultural initiatives. Sources used include existent (and publicly available) materials that

constitute an 'unofficial archive' of projects and ideas by a range of artists and architects (many of whom it should be said employ a form of praxis which is distinctly research-orientated, often resulting in the production of multivalent forms of document, including cartographic, photographic and film based materials as well as written texts). In particular I carry out a series of close readings of the writings, previously published interviews and web based presences of practitioners in this emerging field. I also draw on an analysis of the writings of curators who have formulated international curatorial projects under whose wider umbrellas of research, such practices are being disseminated. My analysis also includes an observation and interpretation of a number of specific works of a range of artists and architects.   As well as drawing on existent sources I utilise a number of primary sources including a series of correspondences with relevant practitioners and more structured interviews.   Conducting such interviews establishes an in-depth perspective on the specificity of such initiatives and provide valuable insights into the motivations and experiences of the progenitors (and participants) of long term artistic initiatives.

Case studies come from a number of different geo-political contexts, including South East Asia, North and South America and Europe. The rationale for these selections is not that they represent a coherent or definitive sample of contemporary spatial practice rather they are gathered together under the rubric of this research project as they constitute the diversity of practices that exist under this somewhat provisional label. More critically however their selection allows for a more nuanced discussion to emerge about the specific spatial and ecological conditions and relations that exist in an extremely variegated geo-political environment.   Equally they are selected based on their potential to offer unique perspectives on the agency of praxis both in the context of actual political effects within advanced capitalist society and in their capacity to actively produce knowledge in ways that interact with or at times 'undo' existent theory. I purposely give more attention to those projects that represent long(er) term collaborations between artists, architects, urbanists and non-specialists, to focus on the capacity of critical spatial practice to reveal, transform or extend agential patterns through interventions that are self-initiated rather than sanctioned by official cultural or

social policy, and that destabilise rather than affirm the respective imperatives of artistic and architectural cultures.

Chapter Outlines

It is worth pointing out that this is a project that is conducted in the spirit of attempting to develop an innovative and responsive account of our contemporary moment and therefore seeks to identify and respond to new theoretical perspectives and forms of praxis that emerge during the period of writing. By its very nature this research is therefore contingent and reflexive and its emphasis is on a self-consciously untidy perspective which will no doubt produce a conclusion that inevitably points to further critical work. However despite this it is my intention to assemble existing and emerging ideas and 'ways of doing' that demonstrate how theory and praxis are in an active inter-relationship of con-constitution with one another, or put another way where thought and practice cohere and develop around similar concerns. It is this endeavour that I hope will enable a more nuanced discussion of cultural agency and how we think urban subjects and environment(s).

Chapter 1 - *Art, Space, Ecology: From Agency to Agencing*

The opening chapter begins by situating a discussion of cultural agency within a broader definition of 'ecology', in order to encompass human *and* society relations. Surveying the impact of post-natural thought and new materialisms on our conceptions of 'environment' and the role of material agencies I locate subsequent chapters within the dynamics of urban spatialities.   In doing so agency or attempts to 'think' and 'act' ecologically are considered in the specific context of critical spatial practices, it is these trans-disciplinary operations that I argue are often uniquely positioned and disposed to explore the eco-logical territories of our urban spatialities.

Chapter 2 - *An Ecology of Agencing*

In this chapter I set out to examine the principle theoretical frameworks that exist for understanding the mechanisms of human agency in both spatial and eco-logical terms. Pivotal to this discussion is a

consideration of the notion of relational space and the relational model of agency it engenders. Following this I consider discourses that have emerged from eco-philosophy that have issued an eco-political agenda and a form of 'active' materialism that seeks to examine the potentiality of forging new articulations of the inter-relationship between human subjects and our natural and constructed milieu. Under particular scrutiny will be the assumption that agency is *a priori* the distinct prerogative of the human subject, instead the concept of 'agencing' (which attests to the idea of intentionality, agency and instrumentality as a 'distributed process') is adopted to enlist the unpredictable dynamics of confederacies of multifarious actors, both human and non-human.

This chapter argues that intentionality and agency is contingent to complex processes of mediation and translation that proliferate between an array of agents or 'quasi-subjects' including those that are normally overlooked. By relating this revised notion of intentionality and agency to recent thinking about spatial politics consideration is given to how action and change occur in the context of urban environment(s) that are replete with other sources of agency. What is raised as a result of this rethinking is that current discursive models of spatial practice and socially-engaged art would benefit from being cognisant of the permeability of the 'social' and the natural and an evolving political ecology when considering the agential processes at work in contemporary forms of cultural production.

Focusing on an analysis of the project *Drifting Producers* (2003-4) by Seoul based artist collective FlyingCity Urban Research Group and the urban development around the Cheonggyecheon Stream that inspired it, this chapter outlines some of the ways in which practice and theory are co-constituted and works to identify some of the distinct ways in which spatial practice elucidates the process of 'agencing' in the socio-natural environment. Furthermore this chapter seeks to demonstrate how an 'ecology of agencing' can become an effective methodology with which we might better understand the operations of cultural agency.

These two initial chapters are followed with two closely related sections that will explore in more detail a number of distinct thematics each of which seek to interrogate the operations of cultural agency from a number of perspectives. Despite their rather artificial separation into discrete chapters these sections will often intersect with one another through a pivotal line of enquiry, chiefly agency, ecology and the politics of the common, and through the particular case studies of spatial practice that are surveyed. The two sections comprise the themes: *Acts of Commoning* and *Ecological Assemblies*. These sections of writing attempt to explore concurrent issues extrapolated from current forms of aesthetic praxis where there is limited existing literature.

These include examples of critical spatial practice that have emerged in the last decade including projects such as, *Vacant Lots* initiated in 2004 by the Ambulante Construções Group (The Walking Constructions Groups formed by Louise Ganz and Breno Silva) which set up a network of collaborative actions between artists, architects and the community of the city of Belo Horizonte, Brazil. This produced a long term engagement that sought to explore spatial politics in contested urban spaces in terms of land access and use. Another key example under discussion is Fallen Fruit's on-going project *Public Fruit* which began in *2004* which examines the links between food sources, urbanisation and social interaction. Fallen Fruit is a Los Angeles based activist art collaborative founded by David Burns, Matias Viegener and Austin Young that combines cartography with unofficial civic 'services' and public gatherings.

Other projects included in the context of these two thematics include *Eating in Public* a project platform initiated by Gaye Chan and Nandita Sharma in 2003. *Eating in Public* (*EIP*) consists of a number of related activities working at the interstices of art, activism and urban research ranging from establishing unofficial plots for urban food production to setting up networks of free stores and seed sharing stations. Finally a number of projects by Atelier d'architecture autogeree (aaa - Studio for Self-managed Architecture, an architectural collective and interdisciplinary network co-founded in Paris by architects Constantin Petcou and Doina Petrescu) round off the end of these thematic

sections. Examining *Mechanics of Fluids (2005)* and the *Ecobox* project initiated in the La Chapelle district of northern Paris in 2001 critical attention falls upon the manner in which such projects catalyse experimental processes of 'agencing' that evolve from the interactions between networks of participants, policies and materials to form 'novel constituencies'.

Chapter 3 – *Acts of Commoning*

This chapter centres on the theme of *Acts of Commoning*. In this section attention turns towards the concept of the commons, specifically the urban commons and how it might be rethought in the light of post-natural discourse. Focusing on the subject of how, in the context of urban spatialities, physical resources exemplify the deep rooted imbrication of the 'natural' and 'social' orders. This is evident in the way in which common pool resources are routinely inscribed with socio-economic values and in turn when material entities can be seen to modify patterns of collective human action and contribute to the development and longevity of social institutions.

Focusing in particular on land and food as examples of 'socio-natural products' a number of spatial practices are considered in terms of how on-going enclosures of common pool resources produce active sites of urban conflict, and how processes of agencing in these specific contexts can reveal unexpected interactions between a diverse array of 'actors'. What this chapter attempts to bring more closely into view is the way in which spatial practice is able to test the distinctions made between the public and the private, communitarian use and ownership, rights and access, by revealing how land and food are hotly contested 'socio-natural products'.

Chapter 4 – *Ecological Assemblies*

This final chapter considers what role cultural production might play in disclosing the controversies surfacing in a nascent political ecology and how democratic participation by urban subjects is being tested as materiality asserts itself on political agendas. Extending the idea that the urban commons is a site or forum in which we attempt to articulate and actualize other ways of thinking and being 'in

common' or create spaces for precipitating other 'forms of life' this chapter touches on the overlap between bio-political and eco-political discourses to outline some of the threats and opportunities posed by the 'post-natural' for democratic action and a more participative form of urban governance. In particular what is under scrutiny is whether the recognition of non-human forces in an agential regime can assist us in marking out and making sense of contemporary affirmations of non-constitutional democratic discourse and the shifting modalities of consensus and dissensus in urban spatialities. As the fault lines in the current settlement between socio-economic forces and 'nature' are being exposed and as a new rapprochements between nature and human culture are being sought, I ask what kinds of self-organisation, micro-political action and democratic process are emerging 'on the ground' when contemporary spatial practice operates in an ecology of agencing?

This writing makes its final foray into an eco-logical territory by attempting to construct a space for thinking about how we might address the vitality of art and architectural praxis as it begins to erode the notion that culture, society and nature are mutually exclusive territories. Reflecting on the value and currency of invoking 'an Ecology of Agencing' this concluding section extends the idea that any account of cultural agency must adopt a much wider perspective on the locus and mechanics of agency and identifies further critical work to be done in this direction. Finally it aims to pinpoint the contribution that theory and practice as shared and co-constitutive research strategies in Visual Culture can make to the production of knowledge about what kinds of urban subjects and what kinds of environment(s) are being produced in our contemporary urban spatialities, and more crucially how we can establish forms of thinking and acting ecologically.

Art, Space, Ecology: From Agency to Agencing

'More than ever before, then, nature is something made'

(Bruce Braun and Noel Castree 1998: p.4)

'Nature continues to loom as the elusive, originary Other… a system that produces us, even as we (physically, conceptually, discursively) produce it'

(Jeffrey Kastner 2012a: p.14)

In an era when unprecedented transformations are occurring in the contours of our social and environmental landscape it has become increasingly difficult to discern the boundaries between the social and the natural preconditions of life. The fabrication and conditions of our everyday lives and our living environment, our 'life-world', are produced and reproduced through the complex inter-actions that take place within a bewildering array of co-existent forces emanating from both social and natural spheres. In the twenty-first century our lives are just as likely to be shaped by the socio-economic forces of free market capitalism as they are by the natural forces that support or impede the sustenance of living matter; in fact the two have always been deeply imbricated, today this is manifestly evident in growth of international agri-business, biotechnologies and the on-going enclosure of the commons.

In the midst of geo-political struggles and demographic shifts, bio-political controls and the growth of bio-capitalism, impending ecological catastrophe and the crisis of our carbon-based economies we are reminded of how the dualistic thinking, typified in much of modernity, that has separated the spheres of the natural and the social, can no longer be sustained in the light of such important and pressing challenges to human existence or to how we think about our environment(s). In placing nature in a zone of externality from society, narratives that announce the 'end' of nature are able to propagate around the assumption that the interventions of humanity are distinctly 'un-natural' and inherently detrimental.

However our relationship to nature like any other species is immanent and therefore any 'intervention' in it problematizes and undermines this duality. We are both produced *by*, and given our geographical reach and technical prowess, increasingly, the producers *of* nature. As Deleuze/Guattari suggest 'man and nature are not like two opposite terms confronting each other… rather they are one and the same essential reality, the producer-product' (1984: pp.4-5).

Acknowledging our place *within* and *of* nature allows us to rethink our understanding of environment(s) and action in our life-world, as Braun and Castree have argued, moving beyond the nature-society dualism creates a space for 'building critical perspectives that focus attention on how social natures are transformed, by which actors, for whose benefit, and with what social and ecological consequences' (1998: p.4).

If human action on the 'body' of nature is not 'un-natural' *per se*, then what is crucial when seeking out an alternative bearing on how we view our environment(s) and our actions in it is not the assertion of the sanctity of nature inherent in acts of restoration any more than it is to establish moral reparations against human culpability in its demise. Instead it would be more pertinent to seek a non-essentialist perspective on our environment as well as developing effective methodologies through which we can gain insight into the politics of social natures, how they are produced and the patterns of agency that take place between the different actors that populate them.

Contemporary cultural production, in particular aesthetic praxis, has a significant role to play in this respect, equipped as it is with a particular disposition to draw together multifarious elements into atypical alignments, compositions and assemblages that have the capacity to de-limit habituated thought and action in relation to our changing milieu. Contemporary forms of visual culture have been able to successfully mobilise processes of visualisation in ways that can unseat the dominant discursive and material relationships we have formed with 'nature'. Such processes of visualisation as well as diverse spatial 'constructions' have emerged from both art and architectural culture in

ways that can channel our perceptions and understanding through new affectual routes and knowledge streams that meditate on the ideological, psychological and material construction of our environment. This re-routing of our understanding of, and relationship to, our material environment has been realised when artists and architects have been drawn into an experimental engagement with cartographic forms and processes expanding the capacity that these distinctive visualisations possess to see the world anew.

Buckminster Fuller's *Dymaxion Map* (published 1954), a projection of the Earth that can be viewed flat or folded is just such an example of this productive form of experimental cartography. The map was the first flat projection of the Earth to make visible the land mass as a single entity within a vast expanse of ocean. By producing an image of the Earth free of the relative distortion between countries and the disconnection of continents found on traditional maps, this radical projection collapsed the geographic, material and political 'distance' between humanity and the rest of the planet, reflecting Fuller's own belief in the synergetic character of 'spaceship earth'. As such it stands as a significant example of the potential role that visual culture can play in challenging the hegemony of existing scopic regimes and redrawing the lines between the natural and cultural spheres. This use of cartographic visualisation to unseat the dominant discursive and material relationships that we have formed with 'nature' can invert the naturalised spatial hierarchy between ourselves as subjects and an 'inanimate' environment as object.

Though artists and architects engagements with cartography as a radical form of visualisation have gained momentum in recent decades, it is those aesthetic practices that have begun to move beyond representational forms that I seek to address in this study. What has begun to emerge in recent years is a distinct manifestation and deployment of a trans-disciplinary aesthetic praxis, one that contributes additional momentum to the on-going evolution of new forms of production, participation and dissemination in contemporary art, and one that offers new pathways of thought and action in relation to our lived environment. Departing from the re-imagining of nature through

counter normative visualisations or object based production, recent examples of aesthetic praxis are instead choosing to employ the tactics of more interventionist strategies. Actualising live and active insertions of processes that harness a capacity to reveal or catalyse novel interactions between different materials and actors in our socio-natural environment(s).

Through experimental and strategic initiatives such as process-based project platforms, long term fieldworks, research-based laboratories and increasingly collective forms of production a trans-disciplinary praxis has emerged that expands the reach of cultural engagements with 'nature'. Taking aesthetic praxis beyond existing systems of mimetic reproduction, and rejecting the appropriationist logic of nature as 'site', such a form of praxis confronts head-on the notion that culture, society and nature are mutually exclusive territories.

Exposing the tenuous division between nature and culture locates aesthetic production within the context of wider debates that have surfaced in recent decades that have sought to revise the ontological and epistemological separation of the natural and cultural spheres. Such revisionism should not however be seen as a 'reduction of culture to nature' but an opening up to the ways in which nature (and therefore matter) may act as a catalyst that 'incites and produces culture' and it's practices (DeLanda 1997: p.41).

In this way a conception of culture cannot be argued to be somehow outside the sphere of nature or formed of the 'material' of cultural history alone. Instead cultural practices and by extension aesthetic production, derive from the material relationships we form with our environment.[1] Ways of living, forms of interaction and adaptation, responses to environment, and modes of expression are all problems that cultural activity is in the process of negotiating, what culture shares with nature or perhaps what nature bequeaths to culture is namely an *ethics*; or more specifically a

---

[1] For examples of how such relationships have can be traced see Ingold, Tim (2000a) 'Making Culture and Weaving the World', in *Matter, Materiality and Modern Culture*, Graves Brown, P.M (ed.) London: Routledge, pp.50-71 and Harrison, S., Pile, S., Thrift, N. (eds.) *Patterned Ground: Entanglements of Nature and Culture* London: Reaktion Books. Also pertinent here is the discussion of the origins of the term 'culture' and its implications in, Williams, Raymond (1981) *Culture* London: Fontana

politics of alterity and the formation of the subject incited from the relations between communities of living beings and their environments.

What nature also incites is an *aesthetics*; the modes of material expression and forms of ritualized behaviors extrapolated from the more functional actions issued from the processes of self-maintenance and self-renewal in living systems and the spatialised practices of establishing territory and identity. For Grosz following Deleuze and Guattari's line of thought 'art is an extension of the architectural imperative to organise the space of the earth' (2005: p.235). Within this context art is a particular emergence of spatialising practices that harness sensory qualities as its material, as Grosz puts it 'this roots art, not in the creativity of mankind but rather in a superfluousness of nature itself, in the capacity of earth to render the sensory superabundant'(2005: p.235).[2] Extending this line of thought we may also consider how an analysis of the ecological dynamics of living systems and the cultural activities that are impelled by them is also an analysis of the emergence of new ways of being *in* and *with* the world, or more simply put, how we might resolve the ethical problems posed by nature. To cite Grosz once more, this is the 'problem of how to live amidst the world of matter, other living beings, and others subjects' (2005: p.52) or to switch for a moment from the ethical to the aesthetic it is a question of how we might involve ourselves in 'a reorganisation of functions and a regrouping of forces' (Deleuze and Guattari [1987] 1996: p.320) present in nature to enact new perceptions and behaviors and open new worlds of experience.

Alongside distinctive developments in aesthetic praxis the last decade has witnessed a significant number of transformations in the topological and material frameworks through which we view, seek to understand and act in our environment(s). In recent years fresh challenges to our habitual conception of and relationship to, nature have issued from a series of compelling critical re-examinations issuing from the discourses of philosophy, geography and politics and social theory. In this rich and shifting critical landscape 'nature' can no longer be apprehended so easily, as a concept

---

[2] See here also the concept of the 'territory-house-system' and the emergence of art in Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Felix (1994) *What is Philosophy?* (trans. Graham Burchell and Hugh Tomlinson) London and New York: Verso

and as a material reality it has become highly contested. In this respect the term nature can no longer be used to signify a fixed concept, as essentialist perspectives on nature come under increasing scrutiny. As a result there has been a radical rethinking of the certainties we have afforded ourselves by successfully policing the borders between our social and natural environments for so long. Instead the environment or environment(s) we inhabit, shape and modify have begun to feel both materially and discursively unstable, formed as they are from diverse social and natural 'components' in increasingly messy entanglements.

Envisioning our milieu in this way recent discourse presents us with a series of challenges and potentialities in thinking through our environment(s) within a highly fragmented (and contested) conception of 'nature' or what might be better termed a 'production of nature'. Equally an expanded mode of aesthetic praxis being put to work within such a landscape offers opportunities in a similar direction. It is the particularities of these developments and the challenges that these two contemporaneous phenomena provoke, that provide the main impetus to this writing. In particular it is the ways in which the two meet, interact and react that set the more precise parameters within which a focus on renewed critical attention to the inter-related questions of art, agency and environment can take place.

Tracing shifts in the ways in which cultural enterprise is being mobilised in relation to our inhabited environment recognises that current artistic developments represent new and distinctive trajectories of exploration. Trajectories that have evolved from the already established migratory patterns of aesthetic praxis as it has moved into and across other disciplinary boundaries, fields of knowledge production and spheres of action. Questioning the exact nature, composition and dynamics of the spheres of action within which such aesthetic praxis (inter)acts also recognises the imbricated nature of cultural agency in our material environment.

Some of the most engaging questions that have emerged in relation to the trans-disciplinary movements occurring apace between art and architectural praxis and other cultural fields (e.g.

ethnography, geography, cartography, urbanism, activism) are what kinds of knowledge are produced and circulated as a result of these 'conversations', and what is the transformative potential brought about by such promiscuity? In the context of this writing whilst addressing these questions I set out a more precise objective, which is to understand the role of trans-disciplinary praxis, with a particular emphasis on spatial practice, in eliciting new knowledge of our environment(s) and revealing or extending the distributions of agency within them.

It is for this reason that I choose to frame this investigation through the particular focus of urban spatialities, forms of collective action and materiality to formulate a new perspective on the relationships between nature and cultural agency. Put another way I ask what kinds of action, by what kinds of subjects are revealed or enabled when trans-disciplinary creative labour takes place 'on the ground' in socio-natural environment(s), such as our everyday urbanism? This line of enquiry is taken along a number of distinct trajectories that form the main sections of this thesis. These should be read as a series of dialogues between current cultural theory and praxis about relational agency, the urban commons and nascent political ecology.

The purpose of such dialogues is to examine how transversal forms of theory and praxis can signal the eroding edges of the nature/society dichotomy in quite profound ways, generating productive spaces for experimental thought and action that reconfigure the coordinates we use to make decisions about how to proceed politically and ethically in our socio-natural environment. More crucially though it is anticipated that such dialogues will provide a forum on how cultural theory and praxis has the potential to create testing grounds that reveal *how* and *if* we are able to continue to conceive of ourselves as unique moving active subjects in relation to what is increasingly perceived as a more active and connective materiality. Taking on board such a task I therefore draw on a broad network of disciplinary knowledge(s) that will constitute a number of points of departure.

Through an examination of an emergent trans-disciplinary praxis, a form of praxis that moves beyond a mimetic apprehension of the dispersed and somewhat abstract nexus of forces and agents

that determine our socio-natural environment, this writing aims to bring together a constellation of concomitant practices and theories that coalesce around the eco-logical. Important in setting up this process is the assertion of the primacy that a particular understanding of the term ecology plays to this study. It is therefore crucial to point out the precise way in which this term is used before we proceed.

Rather than employing the term 'ecology' in its most 'orthodox' sense, to invoke its dominant meaning and an essentialising perspective that immediately locates, and inevitably limits the term 'ecology' or 'ecological' to specify a system of harmonious natural co-dependence or a series of exclusively 'natural' processes the term will be appropriated differently here. 'Ecology'[3] is used in a re-interpreted form that broadens its points of reference. This re-interpretation of the term rejects the claim of harmony and posits ecology as an articulation of the permeable and overlapping boundaries between nature *and* society, foregrounding the complex and contested character of ecological environment(s).

By collapsing divisions and throwing humans and 'things' together into a unruly whole we are forced to consider the world as a place in a constant cycle of being made and re-made *by* and *with* human subjects, living organisms, non-living matter and changing technologies. This is a world view that negates the clean boundaries drawn around our natural and constructed environments. In much the same way as a Deleuzian/Guattarian conception of ecology evades nature/culture dualisms to offer 'a way to think the environment (and environments) as negotiations of human *and* nonhuman dynamics' (Herzogenrath 2008: p.2), a more pluralistic and messy account of ecology or eco-logics paves the way for understanding the new landscape of politics and action that contemporary aesthetic praxis now finds itself operating within. The term 'ecology' is therefore used throughout this text to refer to the interactions that take place between human and non-humans, interactions that produce contingent subjects and environment(s). Following on from this re-interpretation of

---

[3] The term 'ecology' has of course been co-opted to suit a wide range of disciplinary contexts, for example cultural ecology and urban ecology. In both cases however the emphasis has been on examining the 'internal' systems of culture or the city respectively, rather than their connectivity with 'external' systems, often falling back on the pervasive duality that seperates culture/nature, city and country.

the term ecology it therefore becomes necessary to consider the agential and causal patterns that mediate such interactions.

Through an examination of the points of contact that occur between contemporaneous developments in theory and praxis (where the two are seen to be in a perpetual process of co-constitution) my writing aims to trace some of the ways in which contemporary aesthetic praxis can be seen as cultivating spaces for itinerant methodologies of knowledge production and action. Tracing in particular what they might tell us about, and how they might operate within, a politics of socio-natural phenomenon, or a politics of ecology, and the agential sequences that unfold within its exchanges.

What drives this investigation is the recognition that there is a growing need for a much closer consideration of how contemporary cultural work, particularly that which is taking place at the interstices of art and architectural praxis, is developing new strategic modalities for engaging with our environment(s) and producing a range of interactions between different 'subjects'. Focusing critical attention on the two-fold question of what permutations of knowledge such practices produce and what compositions of 'action' they instigate. In this way we can begin to examine the ways in which such modes of praxis can contribute to our understanding of how cultural agency is put to work within a wider context of 'agencing'? The use of the term 'agencing' is used throughout this thesis as a way of thinking agency as something co-determined, the effect of intersecting actors, forces and interests.[4]

A particular focus is placed on those strategic modalities that take the form of collaborative and collective project platforms, long term fieldworks and research laboratories that render legible the complexity and unpredictability of social natures entangled in urban spatialities. Situating my investigation in this way brings into stark relief a refusal to delineate the contours of our lived environment along social and natural lines opting instead for a more untidy perspective on the

---

[4] The term 'agencing' is examined at length in Chapter 2 Ecology of Agencing

contingency of urban subjects and environment(s). It also underlines the fact that urban spatialities provide a particularly challenging context within which to establish testing grounds for examining the politics of socio-natural phenomenon and their agential sequences. An examination that is crucial given the rapid growth of the urban conurbation as the principle form of human habitat.[5]

Particular attention is given to practices that are imbedded in long(er) term engagements in specific habituated spaces within local urban contexts, practices that come to enlist or risk being enlisted by a diverse range of socio-natural 'actors'. Asserting the local here asserts the fact that the artists and architects involved in these activities are also citizens amongst many others. Asserting the heterogeneous composition of action infers another way of thinking through agency as a process of 'agencing' between the subjects, objects and environmental forces folded into the contemporary urban spatialities.

Spatial Practice

Appropriations of city spaces, forms of temporary urbanism, issues of marginality and migration, alongside questions over the public and the private and ways of envisioning urban futures now constitute a shared terrain of concern and action for the numerous forms of exploration that have come about as a result of recent agitation at the edges of art and architectural cultures. In the last twenty years we have witnessed numerous collaborations and initiatives taking place between the spheres of architecture and art, often as a product of converging interest around the potentialities of public space and urban intervention. However what such convergences of interest have demonstrated is that often art/architectural projects can be easily recuperated as cultural spectacle or as part of a program of sanctioned urban gentrification. A level of greater critical ambition requires a trajectory of praxis that seeks a direct engagement with the emergent forces that produce

---

[5] According to recent studies it is suggested that more than half the human population now lives in urban areas that cover just 2.8% of the earth's land surface, though the territorial expansion of cities extend far beyond their centres, source: UNFPA *State of World Population 2007: Unleashing the Potential of Urban Growth* available at http://unfpa.org/public/home/publications/pid/408

and control space (socio-political, economic, technological) in order to generate expositions of changing spatial politics, and destabilising processes within urban spatialities. This more distinct form of praxis, that has come to be termed as 'spatial practice', is one that attempts to develop new strategic modalities for engaging with our environment(s), resisting strict disciplinary agendas and opening up to more experimental forms of research and action.

Spatial practice can be seen to cut across art and architectural cultures pressing at the boundaries of their respective formal and conceptual enterprises as well as questioning the role that experts and non-experts play in the making or production of space. This is a characteristic often manifested most explicitly through collaborative and collective forms of production. However it is also very much evident in the recognition amongst spatial practitioners that art and architectural culture is increasingly super-imposed with other forms of cultural work and the dynamics of changing quotidian practices, all of which contribute to changing socio-spatial relations and conditions.

Spatial practitioners are therefore often architects who reject traditional architectural conceits and orthodox practices, or artists who seek to participate directly in spatial relations rather than to represent or re-iterate them. In a significant number of cases they are collaborative groups of artists/architects and individuals drawn from associated disciplines who mobilise around a common enterprise and whose goal has been defined by Miessen and Basar as 'the understanding, production and altering of spatial conditions as a pre-requisite of identifying the broader reaches of political reality' (2003: p.23).

In doing so spatial practice can be seen to collapse easy distinctions between thought and action, research and practice, routinely blurring inter-disciplinary fields whilst synthesising and re-directing their established methodologies. Understood in this way spatial practice defines a certain set of operations rather than a clearly defined group of practices or works. What distinguishes spatial practice from contemporary artistic praxis that has urbanism or spatiality as its subject is the

imperative to participate directly in space, or more precisely to participate in, destabilise, alter or extend the systems that underpin spatial relations and conditions. This is a series of operations which might just as easily result in the construction of actual material structures as it may the production of more immaterial novel social alignments in specific spatial contexts. It may also be manifested through research orientated or tactical initiatives that seek to expose, 'undo' or redeploy existing socio-political and economic forces that produce the 'settlements' that dominate spatial relations and conditions.

Seen from the perspective of contemporary art discourse the emergence of spatial practice might be understood as a symptomatic of a long held desire for a practice of art to enter life or more precisely to enter the socio-spatial compositions of everyday life. This desire has produced strands of aesthetic praxis that to varying degrees and extents both problematize and challenge art's condition of autonomy. And although it is beyond the scope of this current writing it is a desire that is easily traced back to the politics of the historical avant-garde and the subsequent collapse of clearly defined boundaries between cultural hierarchies and cultural forms.[6]

The impetus for art to enter life set into motion during the post-war phase of Modernism saw a rapid succession of moves to occupy and activate the socio-spatial compositions of everyday life (through unofficial actions as well as culturally sanctioned means), this is borne out in the various manifestations or modes of artistic practice that came into being in the second half of the twentieth century (such as performance, socially engaged art, public art and site-specific intervention).[7]

However it is more recently that socio-spatial relations and the politics of space have become such pivotal concerns for artists and architects alike, a result of the radical reappraisal of each disciplines own critical agendas and their relationship to each other's. Coupled with the fluid exchanges taking

---

[6] A detailed account of how the urban figured in the politics and practices of the historical avant-garde can be found in the first three chapters of Miles, Malcolm (2004) *Urban Avant-Gardes: Art, Architecture and Change* London: Routledge

[7] Such artistic developments have been widely discussed, for instructive surveys see for example Ferguson, Russell (ed.) (1998) *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object 1949-1979* Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, Lacy, Suzanne (ed.) (1996) *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* Seattle: Bay Press Doherty, Claire (2004) *Contemporary Art from Studio to Situation* London: Black Dog Publishing

place between the margins of art and architectural cultures is the re-invigoration of the critical dimension of cultural enterprise when employed as a means of practicing space for counter normative affect or as a methodology of spatial re-codification. Such productive meeting points between art, architecture and theoretical re-mappings come about when thought and practice is moved to reflect on and transform space (both spatial relations and conditions) rather than merely describing or re-iterating them.

This form of praxis where both thought and action can contribute to the critique of dominant spatial settlements, or to a condition of criticality capable of distilling agential potentiality through the production of new knowledge(s) and new modes of practice is explicated by Rendell (2006) in what she has termed 'critical spatial practice' (2006: p.6). Though it may be problematic to attribute such criticality to some forms of spatial practice at the expense of others, what is certain is that spatial practice eschews the traditional roles and jurisdictions of artist and architect, and in doing so spatial practitioners have developed other programs for art and architectural culture within the wider politics of space and relational agency. In the context of the broader activities and initiatives of spatial practice such concerns have formed the basis of the principle terrain of investigations and experimentation for artists/architects acting as interlocutors between disciplinary fields, cultural forms, and diverse groups of participants.

Expanding the fields of both art and architecture, spatial practice as a distinctive form of praxis is increasingly recognised as the culmination of widening research methodologies in spatial and urban theory that has issued a proliferation of inter-disciplinary engagements with changing spatial politics, an initiative to which artists and other 'non-specialists' are contributing by offering their own unique perspectives.

This more 'spatially attuned' culture has produced both a form of praxis and an evolving discourse that has sought to address the significance and complexity of the relationship between artistic

genealogy and spatiality, in particular aesthetic interventions and strategies and their potential role in producing and altering spatial conditions (see Deutsche (1996), Suderberg (2000), Miles (2004), Doherty (2006), Rugg (2010) and Thompson (2012). Such articulations of artistic production constituted *in* and *of* the social spaces of the city, or more specifically the spaces and challenges inherent in planned and constructed environments has brought artists into direct contact with urban spatial forms and architectural 'materials', processes and ideologies. This contact with, critique of, and at times partial enculturation by architectural culture is a common feature of certain strands of 'spatialised' post-conceptual art and contemporary art practice.[8]

This is a feature that has derived from what Peter Osborne (2006) has described as the 'architecturalisation' of art (2007: p.18), a process that has brought about a collision of the autonomous and functional directives that for many still exist between art and architectural cultures. In Osborne's analysis architecture and urban form has existed as a 'signifier of the social' for art (2007: p.18), whereby the condition of functionality inherent to architectural design is read as it's imbrication with socio-economic and political realities. Crucially then, for art, 'the architectural' is viewed as an opening onto the 'archive of the social use of form', that affords it a capacity to transform its efficacy and its political relevance by catalysing its 'socio-spatial effectivity' (Osborne 2007: p.18). The challenge of maintaining a position poised somewhere between autonomy and functionality is one that seemingly determines to what extent art is seen to offer critical insights on, or instigate transformative action within, the politics of space. The risk is always that such an engagement simply re-iterates or reproduces existing socio-spatial relations and conditions.

However the genesis and subsequent development of spatial practice has as much to do with an on-going desire on the part of artists to seek out a more transformative potential for aesthetic praxis as it does a radical re-drawing of the existing parameters of architectural and spatial design. In fact

---

[8] See for example the architecturally engaged works of Gordon Matta-Clark and architectural structures of Dan Graham. Or for more recent examples, works by Michael Rakowitz, Andrea Zittel and the artist/architect Marjetica Potrč whose works exist in both urban settings and the context of the gallery

both of these impulses are marked by the recognition of the enormous changes occurring in the landscape of urban spatialities. A recognition brought about by the increasing illegibility of the city when seen as a product of the rationalization of the built environment, and a growing realisation that contemporary urbanism had more to do with the city as a contingent function of the network of forces driven by global capital.

The emergence of a distinctive spatial practice marks not just a desire on the part of artists to embed their activities within spatial relations and the processes and forces that govern the production of space. It also signals a convergence of contemporary art and architectural cultures at the point of their respective attempts to re-define themselves and their relationship to urban subjects and environment(s). The conflation of autonomous and functional directives and the dismantling of a 'hierarchy of spatial influence' has resulted in a visible shift from object to process, individual to collective production and officially sanctioned to self-organised enterprise.

However in a more profound sense it has produced a mode of praxis that distributes itself across a number of material and immaterial registers to actively 'trespass- or 'participate' – in neighbouring or alien knowledge-spaces' (Miessen and Basar 2006: p.23). Legitimising movements between different knowledge bases and experimenting at the borders of physical and non-physical structures have produced significant reciprocal effects on both disciplines. If it is the case that contemporary forms of artistic praxis have undergone a process of 'architecturalisation' then this is a phenomenon that is mirrored in the radical shifts in thinking that have brought about a 'conceptualisation' of architectural praxis.

Viewed from the significant changes witnessed in architectural culture during the last fifty years, in particular its attempts to grapple with ethical and political relevance, architecture as a practice, at least at the margins, has undergone a significant re-fashioning. Shaped in equal measures by utopianism, technology, radical theory, pedagogical innovation and new opportunities for

dissemination Scott (2010) connects this re-fashioned architectural counter culture, through its polemics and conceptual practices, to current developments in the field. In this context spatial practice should be regarded as part of the on-going expansion of the architectural field and part of a continuing move towards more 'critical' modes of architectural work that have emerged in recent decades. These 'critical' modes have produced 'other ways of doing architecture'[9] responsive to the challenges of participatory dynamics, political efficacy, agency, as well as the changing landscape of urban spatialities and the propinquity of changing architectural process to everyday spatial practices, (see Blundell-Jones et.al (2005), Franck and Stevens (2006), Haydn and Temel (2006), Miessen and Basar (2006), Petrescu (ed.) (2007b) andMörtenböck and Mooshammer (2008).

Though it is clear that spatial practice has emerged as a result of a closing gap between art and architectural cultures it might of course be possible, and perhaps at times it may even be pertinent to identify divergent tendencies within its sphere of operations along the lines of residual art or architectural imperatives. However in the context of this research it is neither desirable nor particularly instructive to test the levels of differentiation between the broader initiatives and activities of contemporary spatial practice set against the developments in art and architectural cultures. Instead it is far more productive for the purposes of this writing to work with the in-determinacy of such an inter-disciplinary (and increasingly trans-disciplinary) form of praxis. To illuminate how artists/architects (and others), are through evolving cultural work revealing more complex topologies of space, that give us access to new knowledge of the spatial aspects of ecological dynamics, and assist us in developing a more eco-logical understanding of space.

For if, as already stated, ecology refers to the interactions that take place between human and non-humans, interactions that produce contingent subjects and environment(s), then it is useful to think through how such dynamics unfold in spatial terms. Spatial practice already constitutes a variegated

---

[9] For a full discussion of the use of the term 'other' as a preferable term to 'alternative' and the implications of its invocation in the context of architectural culture see Awan, N., Schneider, T., Till, J. (2011) Spatial Agency: Other Ways of Doing Architecture London: Routledge. As an useful supplementary to this text see Rendell, Jane (1999) 'Doing it, (Un)doing it, (Over)doing it Yourself: Rhetorics of Architectural Abuse', in *Occupying Architecture: Between the Architect and the User,* Hill, J (ed.) London: Routledge, pp.229-246

terrain of investigation and action, generating projects and initiatives that operate within, and often contribute to, the constantly shifting parameters of urban spatialities that are produced and re-produced in both discursive and material terms. However what is increasingly being recognised in the discourses of contemporary geographies, urbanism and socio-political theory is that urban spatialities are not constituted of wholly social materials, processes and forces. Therefore to engage the full range of emergent forces that issue from urban spatialities spatial practitioners must be alert to the fact that they enter a terrain that is inevitably interlaced with proximal forces that flow from the socio-natural entities and processes that underpin the city-spaces we build and inhabit.

This more eco-logical conception of space raises a range of questions and challenges for spatial practitioners which include amongst others; how contestations over land designation and use, access and management of common pool resources and the patterns of distribution of biodiversity and bio-cycles play their part in the formation of far more complex topologies of urban space and a heterogeneous field of 'agencing' in our lived environment(s).

In particular what I set out to consider is what is at stake when such projects and initiatives operate in this more entangled topology or more precisely when they come to occupy and extend the dynamic relationships between the competing forces and agents that determine our socio-natural environment, in both measured and unexpected ways. In this respect my investigation does not begin with the assumption that aesthetic praxis in general can or should generate coherent political programs or prescribe transferable or universal solutions. Nor does it take for granted that interventionist or utopic strategies have an enhanced agential capacity. Instead my aim is to examine how cultural production of this sort, and spatial practice in particular, is able to orchestrate provisional and semi-permanent alignments that expose this more complex topology as well as revealing, complicating and extending the agential sequences that unfold within it. Lending us insights into the paradoxical nature of human agency in complex social natures, that point to the attenuated and enhanced character of human agency in respect to our material environment(s).

The Post-Natural

Recalibrating our thinking towards an engagement with the political and agential operations of socio-natural phenomenon acknowledges the parallel constitution of the world we inhabit but remains alert to the fact that the mechanisms of power within its structures are uneven and often highly contested. What has undoubtedly emerged in recent decades as a result of human society's expanding influence and power is the problem of how collective human action has been able to intervene in the world to such a degree that we now risk according to Slavoj Zizek 'destabilising the very framework of life' (2011: p.333). This global threat presents a unique situation that forces us to recognise the dangers of continuing to sanction the full scale delimitation of human actions. The refashioning of living and non-living matter from geological, mineral and biological components into marketable commodities has reached such a scale that it threatens to exert a detrimental effect on the parameters that support all forms of life and in turn on our own future security and freedoms.

This is a paradox explicated provocatively by Zizek (2011) in his recent narrative of terminal crisis in the global capitalist system. Despite an exponential growth in the sphere of influence of global capital in many ways the real success of the capitalist system has been the way in which the ideology of the market has become so comprehensively 'naturalised'. The capacity that the market holds to operationalize local and global environments and resources has resulted in the modelling of a 'second' nature'[10] that makes manifest the dominant settlement between 'the socio-economic mode of production of one of the species on earth' (humanity) and the rest of life (Zizek 2011: p.333). However what we are increasingly witnessing in our contemporary moment is the shifting social and ecological tensions that are produced as a result of the instability of this ideological settlement and the challenges brought to bear on our everyday collective practices by forces and entities that we can longer continue to separate into distinct social and material ontologies.

---

[10] William Cronon has discussed some of the problems of designating nature discursively and materially employing and problematizing the terms 'first' nature and 'second' nature to define a pre-existent untouched nature and a nature transformed by man respectively, see Cronon, William (ed.) (1997) *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* New York and London W.W. Norton & Co

In Zizek's analysis the end of global capitalism or its impending 'zero point' will be heralded by four contemporaneous social and natural forces in the form of impending ecological crises, the rapid revolution in biogenetics, conflicts over intellectual property and access to the commons (food and water) and the unfettered growth of social exclusion. (2011: p.x). These factors are not only inextricably linked with one another but they also point to a 'whole' that the terms 'society' and 'nature' are no longer able to define, discursively we struggle to encapsulate material complexity. This 'whole' must account for the interconnectivity of heterogeneous social and natural forces and entities: humans, animals, machines, tectonics, plants, institutions, weather systems, markets, bacteria etc. that compose a messy ontology cohering and collapsing through unpredictable feedback loops.

The much prophesised literal 'end' of nature threatened by the destabilizing interventions of the human species is an end already present in natures own self-generating cycles of instability/stability[11], understood in this way the term 'nature' is merely a repository for our conflicting idealisations of the material world, as Zizek has argued:

'Nature doesn't exist': 'nature' qua the domain of balanced reproduction, of organic deployment into which humanity intervenes, with its hubris, brutally throwing off the rails of its circular motion, is man's fantasy; nature is already itself a 'second' nature, its balance is always secondary, an attempt to negotiate a 'habit' that would restore some order after catastrophic interruptions' (2008: n.p.)

If there is only 'second' nature and there is no fixed, stable and pure 'nature' which we can seek to sustain, restore or return to, then it follows that there is no autonomous and neatly circumscribed 'social' into which we can retreat to escape ecological perturbations. It would seem that the pattern and structure of our lives, our institutions and our capacities to act are resolutely tied to our material environment. Just as natural entities and forces have begun to re-surface as the de facto grounding onto which contemporary conceptions of our milieu are being built, the centrality of the human is

---

[11] see for example the work of biologist Daniel Botkin who foregrounds the inherent disequilibria of ecologies, Botkin, Daniel (1990) *Discordant Harmonies* New York: Oxford University Press

being re-calibrated in ways that undermine the foundation of our agential sovereignty over other actors[12].

These theoretical re-mappings locate us somewhat disconcertingly in an uncertain and unstable hybrid ontology and within a radically decentred agential regime. Within these critical re-framings 'nature' and the processes of action on or in it remain as elusive as they do complex. Furthermore if 'nature' according to what has been outlined is always already itself transforming and destabilised whilst simultaneously undergoing a transformation and operationalization by human endeavour, we must begin to ask the question where is 'nature' now? And following on from this what is the future of 'nature'?

In the light of such ontological hybridity one answer to such questions is that rather than marking an 'end' to nature, the looming environmental crises of the twenty-first century and our expanding capacity as a species to transform our material environment, has led to a wider recognition that we have in fact always existed in a distinctly post-natural world. A post-natural condition or a condition of being 'after-nature' does not therefore refer to an epochal shift from a time when nature and society were ontologically disconnected, to a point in time in which we now find ourselves where that dualism has all but collapsed. In fact much post-natural thought maintains that this condition is a constant in the history of human civilisation and that we have always been entangled in a distinctly hybrid ontology.[13]

The term post-natural thus encapsulates the idea that 'nature' does not exist as some kind of enclaved ontological territory in which humanity or human society is simply not part of. Post-natural discourse is an attempt to acknowledge a deeply imbricated hybrid ontology and to find the

---

[12] as Bruno Latour has suggested agency is not located in single discrete body instead 'the prime mover of an action becomes a new, distributed and nested series of practices whose sum might be made but only if we respect the mediating role of all the actants mobilised on the list'. Bruno Latour cited in Murdoch, Jonathan (2006) *Post-Structuralist Geography: A Guide to Relational Space* London: Sage Publications p.68

[13] Post-natural narratives and theories have proliferated in a number of disciplines as a response the challenges of thinking and finding a language that adequately addresses the nature-social interface, see for example Braun and Castree (1998), Haraway (1991), Latour (2004), Morton (2007,2010) and Whatmore (2002). For an overview of the scope and implications of ideas propounded by post-natural thinkers see 'Chapter 5, After Nature' in Castree, Noel (2005) *Nature* London: Routledge

language and methodologies with which we might think and understand it. Characterised in this way our contemporary 'life-world' issues a series of particularly knotty ontological and discursive challenges. In recognising that in a world shaped by co-existent (though not necessarily co-operative) forces we occupy a 'lively' material environment, one that contains diverse life forms and living and non-living matter, we encounter a condition where those entities once constituted as natural can no longer be externalised from their enmeshment with everything else.

In fact what we find is that all we have to work with and within is what Bruno Latour has described as a socio-natural 'collective' (cited in Boeri and Bregani 2004: p.230).[14] The questions and challenges that arise from this condition are many and complex, in particular we are compelled to consider what the exact nature of this 'collective' is and furthermore to ask what kind of collective politics it augurs and what kind of future it proposes for its populations? As philosophical, political, scientific and social thought grapples with the ethical and ontological challenges laid down by this post-dualist era cultural production and aesthetic praxis have become increasingly sensitised to the uncertainties, instabilities and antagonisms of our post-natural condition.

In the last ten years there has been an increasing engagement in art and architectural praxis with the problems and challenges that have arisen around our changing conceptions of nature, the dominant relationships we have forged with our environment and the intricate and unpredictable workings of ecological systems. This engagement has become concentrated around responses to the problems and challenges of climate change, sustainability and environmental damage and has produced wide ranging distributions of formal, conceptual and ideological approaches reflecting the rather amorphous character of eco-art.

Despite this move in recent years to a more overt engagement with 'nature' or more specifically with questions of the ecological, both aesthetic practice and discourse can still be seen to engage

---

[14] Latour describes the use of the term 'collective' as a technical term to avoid have to constantly resort to saying 'society <u>and</u> nature'. However the use of the term is clearly intended to evoke the notion of 'collecting together' or 'gathering in elements' from different domains to form a more parallel constitution.

the term ecology in it's more orthodox sense. In this respect there is always a risk that artistic practice and discourse can fail to take account of ecological complexity and can instead fall back on romantic and essentialist views of 'nature', the environment and our relationships to it.[15]

This is most evident when the stated concerns and site of action of aesthetic praxis is too exclusively focused on a predetermined construction of 'nature' seen from an essentialist perspective. In this way nature is treated as externalised from the 'social' and is perceived of too easily as an extra-political sphere. Such treatment has no doubt yielded diverse cultural forms however it remains to be seen how strategies such as poetic intervention or forms of didacticism can go far enough to address the particularities and complexities of our socio-natural environments and the increasingly visibility of our post-natural condition. Contemporary aesthetic praxis has therefore undergone several radical reconfigurations of its mechanisms of production and reception to seek out strategies that are able to offer critical or subversive insights into the uncertainties, instabilities and antagonisms that such a condition brings.

However rather than documenting the principle protagonists or exploring the defining characteristics of a recent 'ecological turn' in contemporary art and architecture, a process which is already well underway in a number of recent publications (see Andrews (2006) Kastner (2011), Moyer and Harper (2011) and Weintraub (2012), this writing undertakes a different trajectory of exploration in relation to the question of recent cultural engagements with 'nature'.

---

[15] This can occur when surveys of the relationship between art and nature frame diverse historical and contemporary practices together exposing the partiality of writers and artists alike. See for example Grande, John K. (2004) *Art Nature Dialogues: Interviews with Environmental Artists* Albany: State University of New York Press, *Art in Action: Nature, Creativity and Our Collective Future* (2007) San Rafael, Calif. : Earth Aware Editions and Weintraub, Linda (2012) *To Life!: Eco Art in Pursuit of a Sustainable Planet* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press

Art, Ecology and Urban Spatialities

Situating my focus on urban spatialities understood as socio-natural environment(s) I attempt to draw together strands of thought and praxis that expose a far more complex topology of urban space and heterogeneous field of agencing in our lived environment(s). Examining how both theory and practice is seeking ways in which it might begin to address some of the tensions that exist in cities as spaces of interconnectivity between heterogeneous social and natural forces and entities. With this in mind emphasis is placed on spatial practices that 'excavate' the entanglements of the social and the natural from urban spatialities particularly those entanglements that are played out through contestations of land designation and use, access and management of common pool resources and the distributions and control of biodiversity and bio-cycles.

Case studies under consideration are those that offer a range of critical insights into the uncertainties, instabilities and antagonisms of our post-natural urban conurbations. In this respect works examined represent forms of a contemporary trans-disciplinary spatial praxis that have emerged from the expanding art and architectural cultures of today that often undertake much wider remits of strategic engagement within our inhabited environment. These are often projects that can be seen to mine more tangential investigations of spatial production that can reveal existing interactions between different materials and actors in post-natural environment(s) as well as extending them in intentional and unintentional ways. Such forms of praxis may not on first appearances be readily identifiable as 'ecological' in the orthodox sense of the term, the rationale for their selection is often then a deliberate strategy to problematize this term and offer another way of reflecting on recent cultural engagements with 'nature'. What interests me is how concomitant thought and praxis might provide us with the 'tools' with which we might understand the processes that determine the formation of urban subjects and environment(s) in the light of post-naturalism.

A trans-disciplinary form of praxis that engages or seeks to operate in contemporary urban spatialities is inevitably drawn into their existing dynamics even as they seek to reshape or modify them in some way. It follows that seen through the lens of a post-natural condition our environmental compositions, in particular the contemporary city space, is formed of a matrix of social and natural materials and forces that are often exposed when we endeavour to think through it or act within it. Taking on this wider strategic engagement with our inhabited environments artists and architects and an increasingly diverse set of collaborators are employing expansive project platforms, collective practices and experimental research laboratories that probe the composition and politics of the post-natural city. The diverse production strategies and forms of dissemination employed by them are symptomatic of current tendencies in spatial practice in their desire to instigate new mechanisms of aesthetic and social experimentation that interrogate the efficacy and perimeters of cultural production and cultural agency.

A renewed interest in how art or architecture may play a role in understanding this post-natural condition or offer space for contemplating it's intricacies, threats and opportunities is most clearly evidenced in the profusion of curatorial projects and events that have sought to reflect on the role of cultural production in relation to a growing number of issues that affect both humanity and the environment. Chief amongst these are the challenges of climate change, ideas of sustainability and the growth and influence of the biosciences.[16] The proclivity for such reflection underscores the sense of political urgency that these issues engender. It also indicates the important role that cultural production plays in creating additional impetus to the momentum that has been gathering

---

[16] A number of significant international exhibitions have been dedicated to the question of nature see *Radical Nature: Art and Architecture for a Changing Planet 1969-2009* (2009) Barbican Art Gallery: London, *Green Platform: Art, Ecology, Sustainability* (2009) Centro di Cultura Contemporanea Strozzina: Firenze, *Greenwashing.* Environment: Perils, Promises and Perplexities (2008) Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Torino , *The Sharjah Biennial 8, Still Life: Art, Ecology and the Politics of Change* (2007) Museum of Art: Sharjah, *Groundworks: Environmental Collaboration in Contemporary Art* (2005) Regina Gouger Miller Gallery: Carnegie Mellon University and *Ecovention: Current Art to Transform Ecologies* (2002) Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati

around a need to better understand ourselves, our institutions and our milieu and perhaps more importantly the power relations that exist between them.[17]

Within this increasingly politicised context debates over the role of political and ethical programmes in aesthetic praxis have been re-ignited (Araeen 2009: pp.679-684) and have given rise to an interrogation of the extent to which recent practices in art can or should be seen to imagine, propose or enact meaningful transformations and deformations of the complex systems that produce nature.[18] That such questions and debates have persisted is symptomatic of the growing awareness of a need to understand or reconcile our 'locatedness' within a 'natural schemata' from a cultural perspective and underlines the exigency for the development of new dialogues between ecological thought and praxis (here praxis is used to refer to both aesthetic and quotidian practices and the critical points of overlap between them). The imperative to advance such a discourse is testament to some of the ways in which emergent practices in both art and architecture have stimulated new trajectories for cultural production and reception that have exposed a more contested jurisdiction for exploring and theorising the boundaries between art and life. Given that 'life' according to our present discussion envisions a much wider sphere of activities and processes that can no longer be neatly contained or policed within a distinctly social realm[19] it is paramount that critical discourse around the question of art and life attends to the demands of this dis-location.[20]

A number of recent critical accounts have endeavoured to identify how contemporary aesthetic praxis might operate in, or contribute to, debates about the increasingly inter-connective fields of

---

[17] recent philosophical and social thought is invested with distinct bio-political and eco-political emphases for discussions of Deleuze/Guattari's general ecosophy see Conley, Verena Andermatt (1997) *Ecopolitics: The Environment in Poststructuralist Thought* London: Routledge, and Herzogenrath, Bernd (ed.) (2008) *An [Un]Likely Alliance: Thinking Environment[s] with Deleuze and Guattari* Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. For a comprehensive overview of the impact of bio-political thought today see Lemke, Thomas (2011) *Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction* New York and London: New York University Press

[18] T.J. Demos examines contemporary 'ecologically minded art' following Fredric Jameson's proposition that the principle ideological struggle of our time is too dispute and resist the naturalisation of the market (2012: pp.191-197).

[19] As Demos deftly demonstrates these 'ecologically minded practices' transport the question of art and life 'into literally new terrain that is not only social but more specifically bio-political and eco-financial' (2012: p197).

[20] exhibitions and publications that address socio-political art practices often make no explicit recourse to this socio-natural conception of life though some have begun to demonstrate an increasing awareness of emerging practices that operate in ways that problematize this, for example see the inclusion of projects by Ala Plástica, Fallen Fruit and Land Foundation in Thompson, Nato (ed.) (2012) *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art From 1991-2011* New York: Creative Time and Cambridge MA: MIT Press

ecology, geography and economics and reflect on what is at stake when art becomes imbricated in a 'life' that is constituted of social and natural phenomenon. Exemplary here is a collection of essays, dialogues and collaborations published to coincide with the RSA Arts and Ecology Conference 'No Way Back' edited by Max Andrews (2006). This anthology brings together the writings and practices of cultural and political theorists, artists, economists, ecologists and activists and in this respect is one of the first texts to attempt to consider the transversal condition of certain forms of contemporary aesthetic praxis. Constructing a forum for critical examination and productive exchange it tackles the subject of the shifting classificatory and ideological ground on which we have based our understanding of 'land' and 'the environment' within the context of the changing face of art production, factional environmental politics and impending twenty first century emergencies.[21]

By tracing twentieth century culture's early evocation of 'the environment' in sixties 'land art', which centred on notions of expanded sculptural practice and 'site', to the range of approaches employed by artists today that reflect both the interdisciplinary nature of ecological thought and the diversification of aesthetic praxis, the essays, interviews, and documents of various artistic projects presented in this volume represent a significant contribution to the development of current discourse on cultural work understood through an ecological imaginary.

Seen from this more inter-connective perspective this collectively produced account goes some way to demonstrate that the efficacy and affectivity of contemporary artistic practices that invoke or make use of the 'land'[22] are determined by their ability to work with the genealogical, epistemological and ideological slippages of the terrain they seek to represent, occupy or transform. In doing so land based practices can come to act as catalysts for a range of productive interactions with a whole host of changing social/global factors and forces that arise outside the field of art

---

[21] Despite shared imperatives amongst environmental movements to protect, preserve or restore nature no unified political program or statement of action exists. For a highly influential critique of orthodox environmentalism, in particular its refusal to reconcile that human society is part of nature see Shellenberger, and Nordhaus, (2004)

[22] although this text includes a diversity of contemporary art practices there is a focus on recent land-based works with a particular emphasis on those that engage with issues of land designation, land rights and land use, see especially projects by Amy Balkin, Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla and Lara Almárcegui

(agriculture, industry, corporate power, biodiversity, tourism, technology etc.), forces that give shape to the ways in which such practices are disseminated and understood.

Whilst there is an acknowledgment of the implicit ethical dimension to aesthetic praxis of this kind, or what might be better described as a recognition of the ethically charged spaces that such works institute[23], the introductory material places a greater emphasis on the ways in which art that works 'on the ground' open up channels of associative action and thought with other fields, exercising an active and embedded cultural ecology. Such an endowment to catalyse novel interactions and produce fresh insights into the 'land' or 'nature' must however be seen within the evolving scope of strategic engagement that artists have sought with their environment. From acts of political negation and poetic intervention to the renewed impetus for tactical activism and utopic experiment, any 'engagement' or experimentation with the 'materials' of 'nature' brings with it a need to examine the particular modes of operation and address put to work by contemporary artists. Such strategic or tactical forms of engagement exhibit varying degrees and qualities of cultural labour and agency and deploy varied mechanisms of participation/dissemination.

For Andrews these diverse strategies delineate a range of independent and un-programmatic attempts by artists to think and act ecologically as they co-opt epistemological and material territory. Furthermore he argues that the exploratory and probing nature of such unsolicited interactions with other forces and fields of disciplinary enquiry characterise an art that exploits its inherent ability to operate across margins in a way that 'exhorts an infinite capacity and context for our critical acuity' (2006: p.21). Andrews draws attention to the pre-potency that aesthetic praxis retains in respect to its capacity for self-determining creative interaction and the potentiality it holds for establishing a distinct form of knowledge production as a result of this.

---

[23] in the introduction to *Land, Art: A Cultural Ecology Handbook* the editor Max Andrews makes reference to the question of value and art or more specifically with recourse to David Hickey, how art can engender a sense of what we come to value (1996: p.21). Elsewhere in the volume Lucy Lippard hints at the role of the artist as ethical advocate, speaking of art 'acting as a catalyst for envisioning alternative futures, new ways of seeing land, 'nature', 'landscape', built and unbuilt environments' (2006: p.15).

In Andrews' view art's contribution to ecological knowledge or action is not found when it is put at the service of an exclusively ethical imperative, placed in the role of programmatically solving problems or taking distinct political stances. Instead it resides in its ability to create unfamiliar or errant connective forms of diagramming that redraw the contextual framework for our ecological cognisance. If this trans-disciplinary communicative mode is what characterises art's potentiality in epistemological terms, what is important is not so much that it produces new knowledge for circulation and consumption rather it is how it creates new frames for thought or facilitates new ways of knowing. However under what circumstances this takes place and whose interests it serves is not made clear and the question of what such practices reveal about our post-natural condition remains underdeveloped.

In respect of these questions there is clearly still some way to go in fleshing out the precise ways in which art's foray into the environment can produce new knowledge. In relation to the question of agency there is scope to interrogate further the precise mechanisms of production and dissemination of such strategies of cultural labour, something that this writing will attempt below. In undertaking such transversal manoeuvres certain manifestations of aesthetic praxis come into active contact with a diversity of forces and entities that populate the socio-natural collective. These can typically take the form of anything from governmental land registries, systems of economic transaction and NGO's to resource bases, bio-cycles and energy flows. The complex relationships and exchanges formed between such heterogeneous forces and entities demands a much closer examination of the processes of knowledge production and action that aesthetic praxis brings about in such contexts. And it is a focus on this aspect that marks the clear point of divergence between the text under discussion here and my own writing.

Other accounts that have appeared recently have continued theoretical work in a similar direction in order to provide ways of thinking 'nature' outside the ideological framings of orthodox environmentalism and proffer a means by which the diverse modes of address employed by artists

today can be understood. Pertinent in this respect is Jeffrey Kastner's (2011) edited collection that attempts to track the dialogues that have taken place in the last forty years between philosophical, social, scientific and cultural theories of nature and the means by which visual culture has given new form to our natural environment through processes of representation, inscription and intervention. It is the particular emphasis on such dialogues that allows for an important evaluation of the important links between practice and theory that have informed the renewed interest in this field of enquiry in a number of disciplines. Focusing on three interlinked themes the text makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the current debates that are taking place around the question of how the relationship between art and 'nature' might be understood today. Delineating a pattern of ideas that have emerged from a rich inter-disciplinary historical context, Kastner's text pinpoints the key writings of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries that have given shape to the way in which contemporary discourses have been renewed and developed. The series of writings and works cited seek to locate how such ideas and influences 'have been translated into operations and objects by contemporary artists' (Kastner 2011: p.14).

In the first section *Material Zones* Kastner introduces a number of accounts of the ways in which human subjects and environments are intrinsically linked via the interconnections of biological processes, thus opening the way for a deeper consideration of a more 'active' materiality. The second section *Evolutionary Ideas* tracks the emergence of theories and forms of praxis that seek to question what we might now assume to constitute nature. Considering this question in terms of the divisions often imposed between our external environment and our own bodies introduces some of the fundamental re-workings of our understanding of the concept of ecology within more socio-political and philosophical accounts. In the final section *Cognition and Conscience* Kastner enlists a diverse range of theoretical material in order to consider how the production of knowledge of nature and our increasing abilities to transform it, create profound and challenging perceptual and ethical dilemmas. In this section such problems are seen to be played out in the range of projects

that are being produced by today's artists, particularly those with utopic inflections to their works or those that address our even intervene in agricultural or bio-chemical processes.

Kastner's collection creates an important space within which a much closer consideration of the question of how artistic engagements with nature have been modulated and transformed as aesthetic praxis has come into contact and formed alliances with contemporaneous thought. What it also enables is an indication of how this particular kind of cultural work has emerged, as art in more general terms, has sought to re-position itself in relation to concerns about its established modes of address, limitations of medium and sites of reception. Given the diversity of historical practices that engage the 'environment' what seems to mark out current forms of aesthetic praxis is as much about the change in the strategic position of the producer and the use of 'life' as the medium for art as it does a shift in our understanding of the terrain they have begun to enter and operate in.

In a group discussion on this topic first published in an edition of Artforum (reproduced in part in Kastner's text), devoted to the 'changing terrain' of land based art practices Claire Bishop has noted that 'today's artists are working within an expanded cross-disciplinary field more likely to involve research as a geographer, social worker, anthropologist, activist or experimental architect' (Griffin 2005: pp.289-295). It is this shift in strategy and mode of operation that has allowed recent aesthetic praxis to become increasingly adept at making significant contributions to on-going critiques of the existing socio-political discourses that define our conceptions and understanding of our environment and our relationship to it.

This strategic and operational shift is tracked in a similar way in other another recent text to emerge on this subject, published by the International Sculpture Center and edited by Moyer and Harper (2011). This anthology of essays and interviews attempts to provide an overview of the legacy of expanded sculptural practice and public art projects on the diversity and efficacy of contemporary environmentally/ecologically engaged art practices. In doing so what is proposed is that aesthetic

praxis of this kind is 'vital to a new formulation of possible futures' and in setting up new potentialities 'to weave culture into a fabric of new connections joining environment, social relations and human subjectivity' (Moyer and Harper 2011: p.9).

Despite the legitimacy of such claims it is important that critical dialogues in this burgeoning area of research address the exact nature of such artistic strategies and the kinds of knowledge and action they make manifest. In this respect the notion of agency and the attribution of cultural agency cannot be taken as givens. There is clearly scope to develop a more precise analysis of the ways in which such emergent forms of praxis can be seen to offer critical insights and new forms of knowledge of our post-natural condition. Just as there is a need to pay closer attention to the question of how such forms of praxis render legible the complex distributions of agency within our post-natural environment(s).

What these three recent publications share in common is that they all seek to identify some of the reasons for visual culture's engagement with nature as a subject and material for aesthetic production in the last fifty years. Teasing out some of the ways in which contemporary aesthetic praxis can be seen to have built on this heritage through a renewed engagement with nature as well as locating where and why it might have deviated from these historical precedents in ways that set it apart. In doing so these texts provide a useful foundation on which our understanding of the distinctive character of emerging forms of aesthetic praxis might be established.

Crucially they indicate that despite art's engagements with nature producing a plethora of artistic motivations, approaches and forms it is in certain manifestations of emergent practice where cultural producers have been brought into the most direct, and sometimes active, contact with the diversity of forces and entities that populate socio-natural collectives. This is often in ways that are only just beginning to be recognised and understood. What is perhaps still left to be done is to consider how these novel relationships and exchanges might be understood in terms of processes of knowledge production and forms of action (agency), in relation to the complex array of

heterogeneous forces and entities at play in our lived environment(s), especially our rapidly expanding urban environments.

Taking a different tack two very recent texts published to coincide with international curatorial projects held in North America and Europe address the changing relationship between cultural production and our wider milieu from the perspective of shifting spatial politics, urban renewal and within the frame of the larger question of the enclosure of the commons. The first publication is a series of essays produced by a group of diverse disciplinary participants in dialogue with the exhibition platform Culture/Nature (Haarmann and Linke 2009). This was a series of site-specific events, research initiatives and public forums that were held as part of the art and culture program of the International Building Exposition Hamburg. Coming close to some of the concerns of this writing these essays reflect a desire to locate questions and problems of urban change and renewal within the wider conceptual framework of a more eco-logical apprehension of the city and the on-going implications of the now widely espoused paradigm of urban sustainability. Most important though in relation to the aims of this research is the particular way in which the discursive tone of the essays are underpinned by a more socio-natural conception of urban spatialities and the agential implications of such a conception.

In the introduction to the collection of essays Haarmann and Lemke (2009) focus attention on the relationship between ecological perturbations, urban planning and redevelopment schemes instituted by municipal authorities. Given the propensity for recuperative reaction to public art projects by dominant groups and forces and the rapid assimilation of cultural enterprise into sanctioned schemes of urban renewal and gentrification it provides a timely re-assessment of interventionist art during a period of ecological sensitivity. Asking what role art might serve in the 'development' of the city when envisaged as a form of critical intervention in the wider questions of how we determine the 'public interest' and how we envision urban futures. In this endeavour

aesthetic praxis is seen to come into contact with a cluster of local and global factors and agents that shape contemporary urban realities.

This observation is expanded into a broader discussion of the relationship between culture and nature and the politics of urbanity. Considering in particular how various cultural phenomena such as self-organised responses to top-down urban planning and small scale artistic interventions might make visible the 'balance of power of agents involved' in urban development and transformation within the purview of a revised political ecology (Haarman 2009: p.76). With recourse to Bruno Latour's rejection of a politics of modernity that serves only reinforce the dichotomy between a 'pure' nature and human culture.[24] Haarmann opts instead for a political ecology that is understood as a multi-faceted network between cultural and natural agents in the form of a 'culture/nature collective' (2009: p.73).

It is this nature-culture collective, comprised of diverse factors, forces and agents that characterise the politics of modern urbanity and the processes that govern its relations and conditions, and it is in this complex context that interventionist art must now be seen to operate. What Haarmann's essay in particular, as well as others featured in the collection succeed in doing, is putting into place a very different way of conceiving both urban development politics and the role of cultural production within it.

A second recent publication that has sought to consider the changing spatial politics of the twenty-first century and the potential roles that contemporary art might play in assisting us in understanding them is a series of essays published to accompany the exhibition Nobody's Property: Art, Land, Space 2000-2010 (2010) held at the Princeton University Art Museum, New Jersey. In the introductory essay of the catalogue curator Kelly Baum (2010) invokes the legacy of environmental art to explore land based practices in relation to the politics of space, violent conflict and ecology. Focusing in part on the vexed question of what manifestations of economic and political power can

---

[24] See Latour, Bruno (2004) *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy* Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press

be seen to contribute to the on-going enclosure our public commons in a contemporary post-capitalist world. This question is posed within the context of rapid geo-political change, emerging and embittered territorial conflict, concerns for environmental welfare, and tensions over resource management and privatisation. Concentrating on the ways in which these interconnected phenomena can be seen to reorganise space and delimit the accessibility of our shared commons (both in terms of place and physical materials).

Such a line of enquiry involves the identification of how such contemporaneous influences are able to reconfigure the physical landscape and reformulate the distributions of our material commonwealth. Especially those that produce the kinds of profound effects that fundamentally remodel human relations and the relations we establish with our environment, or put another way whereby 'principles of exclusion and asymmetry supplant those of inclusion and equality' (Baum 2010: p.11).

This is an endeavour based on an understanding that *the commons* in the first instance denotes the idea of 'collective ownership' but that also recognises that this term is also nuanced with other meanings associated with human relations including 'sociability, commonality and democracy' (Baum 2010: p.11). In this sense engaging with questions of the commons today means coming to terms with the complex interactions and conflicts that occur between the state, its citizens and physical territory. This is by no means a simple task given the often contradictory impulses and conflicting interests represented in late-capitalism, globalisation and national sovereignty.

For Baum the role of contemporary aesthetic praxis or 'contemporary Environmental Art' is 'to sound out these contradictions' (2010: p.18) making visible the ways in which they are played out in our material environment, especially through the land and the myriad forms of resources it embodies and supports. Elsewhere in this publication Yates McKee frames a similar discussion of historical Land Art practices in more explicitly eco-logical terms (2010: pp.59-63). In doing so he reflects on how such a group of works might be understood retroactively in the light of the anti-

nostalgic reframing of nature evident in current post-natural thinking. What he concludes is that emerging forms of praxis that engage the environment and its material composition today are beginning to offer 'crucial insights into this project of re-framing' and in parallel to this he suggests that the role of discourses in contemporary visual culture could be to extend and inform this capacity (Mckee 2010: p.59).

In common with other examples in this field of research, such as those already discussed above, Baum (2010) demonstrates how contemporary developments in land-based art practice can be distinguished from their predecessors by their shift in register. Something it could be argued that has been brought about by the renewed criticality of strategies that engage the environment as a subject and material for artistic production and the critical dialogues taking place between practice and theory.   Identifying four distinctive typologies (the investigatory, the para-fictional, the interrogative and the interruptive) her essay assists our understanding of how cultural production might contribute to processes of 'deciphering space'. Equally it points to how emerging forms of what we might more accurately be referred to as 'spatialised' artistic practice might 'make space signify against the grain, to make it speak otherwise, to make it act otherwise' (Baum 2010: p.12).

The two preceding publications discussed above operate in an engaging counterpoint with one another adopting as they do such a distinctly socio-spatial lens through which to view our radically changing perspectives on the relationship between nature and culture. It is in this respect that they overlap with some the concerns at the centre of this current writing, especially the intention to situate my focus on urban spatialities understood as socio-natural environment(s). Developing current discourses that exist around 'spatialised' aesthetic praxis the emphasis of this research is placed on a range of critical spatial practices that 'excavate' the entanglements of the social and the natural from urban spatialities. Allowing for a reflection on how such entanglements are being played out through contestations of land designation and use, access and management of common

pool resources and the distributions and control of biodiversity and bio-cycles in the context of contemporary urbanity.

Whilst there have been, and continue to be a wide range of critical approaches taken to this subject, existing literature in this specific field and in visual cultures more generally have only recently begun to recognise the exigency for a renewal of critical dialogues on art and nature. More pressing than this perhaps is the recognition of how such dialogues intersect with and contribute to the confluence of ideas springing up from disparate disciplinary corners that have undermined the certainty of terms like nature, culture, ecology and agency.[25] Expanding on existing literature I intend to examine the points of contact that occur between contemporaneous developments in spatial theory and praxis (where the two are seen to be in a perpetual process of co-constitution) and how spatial practices may constitute a particular methodology through which we can gain insight into the politics of social natures, how they are produced and the patterns of agency that take place between the different actors that populate them. It is aim of this writing to consider what is at stake when aesthetic initiatives operate in this more entangled socio-natural collective, however, what sets it apart from previous accounts is the insistence that the notion of agency cannot be taken as a given and therefore attribution of cultural agency cannot be assumed so easily.

Unlike a number of recent publications that have begun to address the renewed relationship between art and nature the purpose of this project is not to trace a new historically and geographically located movement in recent aesthetic praxis no more than it is to define how this renewal sits within a narrative of genealogical development in contemporary art. Instead I am far more interested in the ways in which art and architectural cultures have produced a diversity of spatial practices that expose the eco-logics of our lived environment(s). Looking at how spatial practices have developed as collaborative trans-disciplinary forms of praxis, generating experimental

---

[25] In this respect the publication of Third Text Journal's volume dedicated to this subject and released at the same time that this writing was being completed is particularly timely and noteworthy. See Demos, T.J. (guest ed.) (2013) *Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology Third Text*, Vol 27, Issue 1, Jan 2013, as is the publication Relational Architectural Ecologies (2013) by Peg Rawes, which sets out to subject current ecological thinking in architecture to a radical re-appraisal by adopting a more inter-disciplinary trajectory.

project platforms that make visible the uncertainties, instabilities and antagonisms of our post-natural condition. My writing thus explores how such initiatives offer new insights into the agential sequences that unfold within our socio-natural collective, especially within the context of urban spatialities.

In particular what motivates my enquiry is a desire to examine the ways in which an emergent praxis, one manifested through a distinct disciplinary itinerancy and mode of collective production that utilises and augments these sequences is able, through co-authoring strategies to create novel 'constituencies'[26] of social-natural materials in urban spatialities. My enquiry focuses on the particularities of how these uncertainties, instabilities and antagonisms inherent in our post-natural condition are evidenced in the context of the perpetual reconfiguration of urban subjects and their environments. In doing so attention is given to the spatial structures and modes of 'sociality' that can emerge within the dynamics of socio-natural 'collectivity' in order to the trace the distributions of tension/cohesion that such 'constituencies' generate.

Giving attention to 'collectivity' in this way demands that the potentialities of such 'constituencies' are considered from a more materialist perspective. Constituencies are in this way recognised as having both a spatial aspect and a material composition, they are clearly made up of something(s) interacting somewhere. Therefore two parallel lines of questioning will be followed: firstly what is it possible for us to say that these constituencies of 'things' are? Or put more simply, from what are they constituted? Secondly what can be said to be taking place when 'they' come together in the context of post-natural urbanism?

Faced with the enormity of challenges and potential conflicts that arise from our post-natural condition especially those that issue from global intensifications of urbanization, the on-going

---

[26] The term constituencies is used here to invoke the potentiality of practices to bring about heterogeneous compositions that reformulate or destabilise dominant alignments. In this respect I draw on the etymology of the term, ('together' and 'set-up') and compound the material and political meanings of the term.

enclosures of our common pool resources and the 'programmatisation'[27] of the land and the landscape there has been a measure of political withdraw and an evacuation of state responsibility for the socio-economic re-modelling of nature. It is the gaps and voids opened up by such ambivalence and impotence that can provide space for free market expansion and the accumulation of capital, by the same token it can offer fertile territory for cultural producers to generate transient or semi-permanent interventions, experiments, and initiatives at various scales that elicit other kinds of responses to and offer alternative articulations of action in the provisional relationship we have to other agents and our environment(s).

Agency and the Materialist Turn

Alongside the faltering of political will to address the fundamental instability of our post-natural condition what is also increasingly apparent is that faced with the complexity and scale of the challenges such a condition makes manifest, agency can no longer be considered the sovereign territory of human actors. Collective human agency or our capacities to affect desired change and 'make a difference' simply cannot be extricated from our messy and unpredictable entanglements with raw materiality, which itself exerts its own agential influences. As Zizek has recently pointed out 'materiality is now reasserting itself with a vengeance in all its aspects, from the forthcoming struggles over scarce resources (food, water, energy, minerals) to environmental pollution' (2011: p.330).

Such a re-appearance of the notion of material dependency (and with it the tangibility of material agency) coupled with the fact that such material entities remain central components in our material reality remind us of the interwoven condition of the natural and the social that for some have always characterised the development and stabilisation of our 'material civilization' (Braudel 1981: p.28).

---

[27] To programmatise suggests tried and tested techno-economic interventions that orientate nature's 'power' towards effects desired by the intervener, this process mirrors what Rabinow has described as a flexible and administrated 'operationalized' nature ushered by modern bio-sciences, see Rabinow, Paul (1990) 'Artificiality and Enlightenment: from Sociobiology to Biosociality' in *Incorporations* Crary, J and Kwinter, S New York: Zone Books pp.190-201

According to Braudel's (1981) broad analysis of early modernity the material life of human societies was shaped significantly by the ways in which material components (such as water and biomass) were drawn into and influenced everyday practices, interactions and formations of infrastructure and economic institutions. During late modernity these patterns and structures were significantly modified with the impact of large scale industrialisation. In the case of water this produced an effective 'disappearance' of a material substrate into the technological and economical infrastructures that fed off the natural water supply, a process that according to Kaika (2005) has produced hybrid products of physical matter and human enterprise. It could be argued that raw materiality has up until now been rendered almost invisible as it was subsumed into the new materiality of industrial technology and capital.

Hinchcliffe (1999) describes the process by which nature has been gradually expunged from cities as they expand and develop, however what takes its place is a city-nature formation in which the visibility of our material substrate has been diminished. However the instability of the current settlement between nature and advancing socio-economic forces has begun to expose this 'disappearance'. What our present condition of material civilisation has begun to throw up is a kind of 'leakage' of raw materiality that our social and technological structures have up until now been successful in rendering invisible. In the first instance this 'leakage' is occurring at the level of our everyday existence as environmental crises and scarcity and contestations over material resources become more apparent. Secondly it is felt at the level of our wider consciousness as we are reminded of our immersion in and dependency on a material environment that both old 'hard' technologies and new 'soft' digital technologies are not able to release us from.

The re-presencing of materiality is felt all the more acutely in the context of the contemporaneous development and growth of human population, bio-technologies, national and trans-national urban conurbations and a globalised market economy. Matter and questions of materiality have seemingly forced themselves onto global and local political agendas. This has required that we re-examine our

relationship to materiality and the role physical entities play in our everyday and political lives. In re-thinking the implications of our changing material existence new forms of materialist critique have ushered reflections on the porosity between the natural and the social, the human and the non-human and the political and the ecological in our evolving milieu. In general materialist critiques have intersected around an interrogation of the concept of a life-world that is 'more than human' to reframe our understanding of how physical entities and objects, from microbes to microchips do more than just colour our material reality.

The last ten years has produced a range of materialist explorations that have re-invigorated discourses in a number of disciplines from political science to material culture. Such a reappraisal of materiality has augured a plethora of 'new materialisms' that seek to investigate our material reality and provide plausible accounts of the material world in the twenty-first century. In these debates matter and material processes are being radically re-considered to the extent that and they become central to new formulations of how we apprehend and understand our material co-existence and the 'agencies' at work within it.

Coole and Frost (2010) have advocated attempts to reformulate our thinking in this direction. Demonstrating the significance of theoretical work in rethinking materiality in a way that is alert to the challenges laid down by rapid geo-political, environmental and socio-economic change. However they make the important observation that there is no singular approach to new materialist critique and that instead 'new materialisms' include a diffusion of scholarly trajectories that are linked most clearly by the shared recognition of our immersion in material complexity and influence. They pinpoint three interrelated strands of thought that characterise these new materialist debates all of which are resonant with an investigation of urban spatialities, agency and the wider political ecology. For them strands of thought such as 'ontological reorientation', 'the status of life and the human' and a 're-engagement with political economy' testify to the growing emphasis on matter

and material process in questions of agency, ethics and social systems respectively (Coole and Frost 2010: pp.6-7).

This materialist turn is evidenced in a number of other significant contributions in current thought and can be tracked through the emergence of scholarly debates around 'agential realism' 'object-orientated' philosophies, 'vital' materialisms, materialist histories and 'hybrid ontologies' (Barad (1996) Bryant, Harman, and Srnicek (2011), Bennett (2010) DeLanda (1997) and Latour (2005). For example, borrowing insights from non-linear dynamics DeLanda (1997) examines the ways in which human entities such as cities, economies and language are specific forms of adaptation that have emerged from the material processes of sedimentation and stratification seen in geology and biology.

This re-evaluation of the ties between materiality and human culture is also increasingly apparent in the material inflection given to recent analyses of culture and society that seek to understand the relationships between people and the material world and the ways in which matter has shaped our societies and social structures (Appadurai (1986), Graves-Brown (2000), Ingold (2000), Dant (2004), Miller (2005) and Hodder (2012).

In the context of discourses in the social sciences there has been a dominant though not exclusive focus on a materialist analysis of the non-human through technological or fabricated objects/commodities. However in other fields of enquiry such as geography and political theory the focus has incorporated other kinds of 'objects', chiefly the heterogeneous array of physical entities that populate our material environment. Most notable here is the now widely cited treatise by Bennett (2010) in which she advances the idea of an inherent 'vitality' to our material existence; whereby matter, far from being considered as inert or inactive, is on the contrary seen as ever present and active in the events and actions that unfold and give shape to our life-world. In theorising the participation of material phenomena (such as electricity and stem cells) in wider

events, or in the web of forces that dictate living conditions and relations, she foregrounds an agency of 'things' in ways that issues a significant challenge to the human hubris.

Bennett contends that there has yet to be a 'robust debate' either in the sense of weighing up opposing views of materiality or in how materiality figures in the political sphere (2010: p.xvi). Her method stems from a desire to highlight and test 'the agentic contributions of nonhuman forces (operating in nature, in the human body, and in human artefacts)' (2010: p.xvi). This can be understood as a self-conscious attempt to 'sketch a style of political analysis that can better account for the contributions of nonhuman actants' one that attempts to recognise that human intentionality only takes on 'potential within a confederacy of other forces' (Bennett 2010: p.x). Bennett's work on the agency of 'things' reclaims agency from the limitations and conceits of anthropocentric framing and situates human agency within a contingency of other forces and actors.

In a similar way philosopher of science Karen Barad's conception of an 'agential realism' (1996) is predicated on the notion that a socio-natural world and the entities that inhabit it are mutually constructed. Barad's materialist version of agency moves beyond the idea of causality or change occurring as things (subjects and objects) interact with one another, a view she contends presupposes both a separability between things, and the existence of distinct boundaries between unique and self-contained entities. Barad's task then is 'not merely to include nonhumans as well as humans as actors or agents of change but rather to find ways to think about the nature of causality, origin, relationality and change without taking these distinctions to be foundational or holding them in place' (Barad, 2012b: p.32).

Supplanting the term 'interaction' between things with an 'agential realism' formulated around the concept of 'performative intra-actions' (Barad's own neologism) she constructs a radical post-humanist understanding of both agency and identity. Where 'agency is an enactment, not something someone has, or something instantiated in and individual agent' (Barad 2012a: p.77),

going further she suggests that 'individuals' only emerge from material 'phenomena'(material relations) as a result of these agential intra-actions. Under such a profoundly contrastive description Barad seeks to relocate our understanding of how reality is formed 'in the "between"; in the inseparability of natural-cultural, world-word, physical-conceptual, material-discursive, so as to emphasize how humans, animals, materials and things are not fixed prior to material discursive signification but in it' (White and Wilbert 2009:p.11).

Materialist undertakings like those initiated by Bennett and Barad bring about a timely re-evaluation of how we account for and attribute agency and how we might navigate the new ethical territories we enter with 'things'. For Barad this has profound epistemological, ontological and ethical implications. For Bennett the 'material' thought in this way 'will offer different diagnoses of the political and its problems', invoking a different spectrum of democratic participation and culpability in a post-natural condition (2010: p.38).

By gathering together various strands of 'new materialisms' it might be possible to begin to formulate a different way of thinking about the operations of agency, or in this specific case cultural agency, from a more materialist perspective. Gaining an impetus from materialist analyses forms of praxis 'on the ground' or those that create novel 'constituencies' of the social and natural can be considered in terms of the specificity of their compositions and the interactions they reveal or extend. Thus I use such examples to problematize the idea that human agency is consistent and central to changes occurring in quotidian contexts.

From Agency to Agencing

Today the more trans-disciplinary exchanges between contemporary art and architectural praxis, ethnography and urbanism in expanded forms of multifarious spatial practice have generated modes of creative labour contiguous to other forms of cultural production, chiefly activism, radical

pedagogy and everyday practices. The 'active smearings' that continue to take place between different modes of cultural expression or across a continuum of cultural production generate a series of engaging questions about where art/architecture resides, how it's labour is put to use and what it is able 'to do'.

What is of particular interest in the context of this writing is how this interrogation of the continuum of cultural production in turn generates distinct enterprises that test the contours of the 'operational field' of intentionality and agency. The subtle distinctions between the two interconnected concepts of intentionality and agency are important to note here, as each are inflected with individual and/or collective emphases that testify to the challenge of reconciling cause and effect in human action. Intentionality, used here in in a non-metaphysical sense, refers to the individual or subjective process of constructing an aim that guides an action. Intention then is how we 'direct' an action to produce or solicit a desired outcome.

Intentionality could therefore be seen as an exercising of our individual free will, subjectively formed and subjectively orientated. However as philosophical debates following Hume and the free will problem demonstrate intentionality, or free will, are more than often determined. It follows then that to a certain extent 'one' does not form an intention autonomously or independently.[28] In a similar way agency slips between an individual and collective register. Agency after Marxism has become increasingly imbued with a more collective rather than subjective character. Marx's reworking of a Hegelian 'universal class' is an idealist proposition for a collective recognition and action that is taken to realise universal interest.[29] Human agency under such a description refers to a collective form of agency that emerges from a historically dynamic process whereby human

---

[28] Hume's writings on causation can be seen to overlap with his ideas on determinism and free will, arguing that despite the fact that free will and human action is often exercised within certain bounds emanating from social and psychological sources it does not always follow that it will be. In other words free will and determinism under his description can be seen to co-exist. For a first-hand account see Hume, David [1777] (1975) 'Of Liberty and Necessity' in *Enquiries concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals* Oxford: Oxford University Press

[29] A Marxian perspective on Hegel's concept of 'universal class' can be found in his introduction to *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law* (1888). For analysis Marx's attempt to locate agency and revolution in collective action see Kain, Philip K. (1998) *Marx and Ethics* Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp.36-40

subjects become 'social beings' organised to act in coalition. Testing the contours of the 'operational field' of intentionality and agency therefore means calling into question to what extent individual free will and collective action are contingent to social, environmental and non-human valencies.

Spatial practices in particular present a challenge in determining the location and operations of agency 'on the ground' as interpersonal, haptic and material exchanges that provide fertile territory for reassessing and rethinking the relationships between subjects and their environment(s). Subjects (humans) are conventionally attributed the capacity of both intentionality and agency in contrast to the 'inert' materiality of our natural and constructed environments, and existing as such active subjects they are placed in relief against the object world. In philosophical terms this posits the subject as special kind of object, one with an exclusive propensity to act so as to produce a specific result, that of change or being acted upon, as the etymology suggests agency or an agent is one who is predisposed 'to do'.

Assigned as it is to subjects, agency has a very particular currency in the context of cultural production, the artist is conceived of as a privileged subject and the figure of the artist is valorised as the site or origination of individual and cultural agency. This location of agency found in the expressive force of the artist is embodied in the special objects of artistic production and is given credence in the claim of an autonomous condition for art in general. The object of art is afforded a special status as an object that differs significantly from ordinary objects in that it embodies the agency of its singularised originator. In this way agency and the predisposition 'to do' is a 'taken for granted' quality in discourses on modern and contemporary art, an assumption that will be resisted in this writing. The idea that art embodies a predisposition 'to do' is especially prevalent in debates over the political agency of the historic avant-garde and is qualified by the affirmation of the autonomous condition of art and the revelatory and disruptive affect of art on the viewer. In this

way it is not so much the condition of the 'distributed agency'[30] residing in the object itself rather it is the 'gesture' of art in itself that is regarded as autonomous, distantiated and self-evidently agential.

The production of art has become synonymous with transgressive action, a distinctive form of cultural agency that continues to be super-validated. Claims for art's autonomy underscore its unique ability to act upon formations of subjectivities and on society as a whole. And whilst it might be acknowledged that aesthetic production enfolds within itself the capacity to generate and mediate strategies of action that might in other contexts be considered as 'political', 'subversive' or 'insurrectionary' it is worth pausing to consider how these strategies of action or agency transpire or are 'put to use'. This requires a much more explicit focus on how such forms of cultural agency exist in a wider ecology.

Agency is often characterised in this twofold manner and human agency or what might be termed the operations of human agency could therefore be understood as the capacities that we ('artists' and 'non-artists' alike) possess to affect change or to the role that intentionality plays in producing novel sets of social outcomes. Put more simply agency is how we conceive of and act on our desires to 'make things different'. However this view of agency is inadequate when accounting for how agency might work on an inter-subjective level or within the context of social institutions and apparatus. Any view of agency that fails to acknowledge the tensions between individual intentionality and the capacities afforded to the individual within a wider context runs the risk of eliding the more complex processual and relational nature of 'agencing'. This is a view that has a tendency to produce a reductive, programmatic and static model of action that conceives of agency as a direct causal relationship, or what we might describe as a transparent instrumentality.

---

[30] Distributed agency according to Alfred Gell describes how art objects might be viewed as the effect of one subject's agency on another subject. This inferred intentionality embodied in the object can be seen as the common tendency to view art in anthropomorphic terms, see Gell, Alfred (1998) *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* Oxford: Clarendon Press

The problem with such a conception is that it fails to take account of the uneven capacities of individuals to 'make things different' and the particular conditions under which agency takes place. Moreover it neglects the collective character of agency, an agency of multiple subjects 'acting together' (though not necessarily in unison). Agency, action or more precisely change, is something that is over-determined and subject to the complex composition of its context. A full account of this collective form of agency would reveal how during the process of 'making things different' human action can bring about unintended and unforeseen effects on other subjects and their environments. Drawing our attention to the question of what is at stake when forms of aesthetic praxis become aligned with political motives and the issue of art that becomes complicit with wider economic or political imperatives.[31]

There is however another consideration in the formulation of such an account and that is the necessity to expose the anthropocentric conceit of a notion of agency that is predicated on the specificity and exclusivity of human intentionality. An understanding of agency calibrated to such a conceit is not attuned to the potential role played by other 'agential' bodies outside of human intentionality and as a consequence their capacities are overlooked. Instead we might need to consider how the capacity of individuals to affect change or the process of 'making things different' occurs when an array of ideas, bodies and 'things' coalesce in dynamic and unpredictable ways.

Here I allude to the way in which artistic practices as a form of cultural agency might operate as 'animateurs' of various bodies, materials and 'things', and thus become catalysers of novel processes of difference. Just as unequal distributions of resources and access to knowledge can elicit varying degrees of agential capacity in the individual human subject so to can our imbeddedness in our material (socio-natural) environment. An 'operational field' of agency implies a conception of agency that is inextricably tied to questions of specific geo-political context, uneven distributions of

---

[31] Fredric Jameson offers an important insight in this respect suggesting that despite the important function of political or utopic art it does not necessarily follow that it will be 'used' politically or make manifest its aims, as an addendum to his analysis it could be added that art that seeks to produce critiques of socio-political realities may through contact with other actors end up re-iterating them. See Jameson, Fredric (2005) Archaeologies of the Future London and New York: Verso

resources and 'active' materiality. This 'operational field' suggests the need for a reconfiguration in our thinking about the locus of agency and acknowledges that the process of 'agencing' is distributed, contingent, and ecological, with the potential to elicit unforeseen effects.[32]

Agency is therefore found in the nexus of human and material/environmental interactions in the form of a series of 'transactions' between a complex of agents. The formation of extended complexes or collectives of agents (both human and non-human) around this process of 'agencing' asks us to consider the ways in which these transactions accumulate, disperse or diminish our capacity to 'make things different'. Thinking agency in this way may assist in reconciling the knotty problem of art that is problematically described as engaging the 'social'. The problem of any definition of socially engaged art has always been the implicit assumption that somewhere there resides forms of art that are somehow 'outside' the social. However there is a much deeper issue that arises as a result of this initial question. That is how any form of cultural production that is seen to engage the 'social' through live insertions into the forms and problems of 'living' can reconcile the binaries of individual/collective action and aesthetic/ethical mandates, around which notions of cultural agency are often built.

The tendency in recent art to attempt to de-limit its own perimeters and generate an examination of its own efficacy has resulted in the proliferation of aesthetic praxis that operates 'outside' of the field of art, this is often manifested as collaborative urban actions, experimental forms of social cohesion, formations of alternative economies and generative fieldworks. It has also placed the notion of agency at the centre of critical debate about the specific mechanics or dynamics of contemporary cultural production, reception and dissemination.

Incorporating other actions (political, activist, social interventionist) under the auspices of art foregrounds the question of how such forms of praxis are recognised as possessing a different agential capacity and how this is mediated through site, other participants, forms of documentation

---

[32] This idea will be examined in depth in Chapter 2 'An Ecology of Agencing'.

and communication technologies used to disseminate such activities. When art operates 'outside' of the field of art or when art tests the contours of the 'operational field' of intentionality and agency how are its operations put into action and what do these operations perform? Evident in both the shift to more collective modes of creative labour and to a more trans-disciplinary nature of spatial practice, such forms of cultural production generate a form of criticality contingent to a specific context and specific groups of 'actors'.

Two very recent publications, Kester (2011) and Awan, Schneider and Till (2011), have sought to examine the particular operations of collaborative art and critical spatial practice in relation to the question of the locus and nature of agency in forms of cultural production that take place within socio-spatial 'structures'. Drawing on the distinct disciplinary and theoretical perspectives of current art and architectural practice and the increasingly shared concerns of both in regards to cultural efficacy and ethical engagement each text tracks the ways in which practice and theory is capable of negotiating the complex terrain of 'agencing' that occurs during inter-subjective exchange and within the power structures of extant spatiality.

In his recent book Grant Kester (2011) resists the commonly held view that agency is tied exclusively to individuation and artistic autonomy, whereby the force of singularised expression or intentionality of the artist finds material form in their labour, and where agency is self-evident and guaranteed in arts distantiated condition. Instead Kester draws our attention to the ways in which recent forms of socially engaged art praxis, chiefly long term collaborative initiatives, frustrate this view by renegotiating the orthodox notion of aesthetic autonomy and by opening up intentional action to the contingency and the affective presence of multiple bodies (and intentions).

In this way he focuses on the ways in which art 'takes place through an unfolding, extemporaneous process among an ensemble of collaborative agents' (Kester 2011: p.114) opening up the possibility of a more serious consideration of the 'transactions' that occur during the process of 'agencing'.

What this view raises is the question of how far such forms of praxis are prepared to go in terms of evacuating themselves of the very indicators of the condition of 'being art' (in terms of process, product and dissemination) that have for so long been the guarantor of both super-validated transgression and self-evident agency. We must ask what kind of artistic agency is brought into being in its place and how might it be differentiated from other forms of cultural and/or socio-political agency?

Kester's thesis builds on his earlier work examining 'dialogical' practices that emerged from more spontaneous and self-organised manifestations of community art that reframe the producer/viewer relationship to one of 'reciprocal modelling' (2011: p.114), whereby action is not pre-determined but is co-constituted in a system of exchange between subjects and as a result where intentionality is de-individuated. The 'mindful surrender of intentionality' (2011: p.115) as he puts it is not therefore an abandoning of artistic agency but an acknowledgement of its potential when it is articulated in another way.

For Kester this can result in a more reflexive and generative approach to artistic agency where '…the question of agency (its attribution, concession and negotiation) is openly thematized in the work' (2011: p.115). This is not to suggest that this de-individuated and reciprocal approach is more likely to ferment a greater capacity 'to make things different' instead it works to reveal the tensions within the process of 'agencing' as a cycle of 'instrumentalization, misrecognition, or negation among its participants'(Kester 2011: p.115).

Kester's goal is to question an essentialist view of the aesthetic by contrasting the binary discourses that have surfaced between a notion of aesthetic praxis that is under his terms able to 'precipitate creative, counter-normative insight' (2011: p.115) through extended temporal integration in specific social contexts and one that performs transgressions and disruptive affects through a resistance to any integration into hegemonic systems (both social and discursive).

These discourses present a particular problem in analyses of agency in spatial practice. Architectural culture in general it would seem is deeply ensconced in the machinations of hegemonic systems, chiefly the market and political forces that constitute official urban planning that are brought to bear on much public architectural design. Agency in the context of architecture is perhaps to be found in that capacity 'to makes things different' using a 'set of tools' and 'nuanced behaviours' that can be wrestled from a re-imagining of the architectural sphere of action, a renegotiation of architectural pedagogy and a cognisance of the ways in which space is produced in everyday urban practices. This should remind us of the destabilisation of top down approaches to architectural and urban planning present in architectural practices operating at the margins of architectural culture as well as their proclivity to quotidian urban practices and urban activism. Architecture thought in this way is something de-professionalised and therefore more horizontally orientated.

In their study of diverse historical and contemporary proponents of 'spatial agency' Awan, Schneider and Till (2011) subject architectural culture to a timely reassessment in terms of how collaborative approaches, bottom up strategies and activist methodologies have produced transformative insights and situations in spatial specificities that build on a co-agency of 'official' and 'unofficial' spatial designers. This 'other architecture' negates the agency attributed to elitist individual spatial professionals and recognises the limitations of locating agency in the objects of architecture. Instead what is proposed is an idea of 'spatial agency' that works to de-limit the program and scope of architectural activity and refocuses critical attention and action towards the temporal and contingent aspects of the production of space enabling the creation of counter-normative spatial 'solutions'. In relocating the process of 'agencing' within a much wider spatial schema any 'solutions' or transformations that occur do so '…as part of an evolving sequence, with no fixed start or finish, and that multiple actors contribute at various stages' (Awan, Schneider and Till 2011: p.29).

Spatial agency is relational in character in that it refutes the dialectic of agency and structure found in modern social theories, whereby jurisdiction is given either to the power of the actions of individual agents to formulate and modify societal structures or it is given to those very structures in the way that they modify and restrict the actions and agency of individuals. Spatial agency according to Awan et al. is a process of action that occurs in an imbricated set of conditions, in other words agency and structure are locked into a perpetual cycle of co-determination (2011: p.31). Spatial agents are therefore 'neither impotent nor all powerful: they are negotiators of existing conditions in order to partially reform them' (2011: p.31), being both negotiator and reformer would suggest a level of intentionality at work albeit one that might be better thought of as inter-subjectively determined.

This duality or relationality is also carried forward into the very mechanisms employed in the collective and temporal engagements of spatial agents on site. The notion of agency as discussed above carries with it a predilection for individuated action, however intentionality taken within a distinctly spatial context follows a more inter-connective and reflexive trajectory. Intention is not simply the carrying out a predetermined action followed by the accomplishment of a predetermined outcome, in the dynamics of spatial agency '…intent is necessarily shaped and reshaped by the context within which the agent is working' (Awan, Schneider and Till 2011: p.31). Spatial agency might be seen as a hard fought process that seeks to enable the 'empowerment of others' or an experimental re-envisioning of intent that produces novel spatial (and therefore social) compositions (2011: p.32).

What is of particular interest in the context of this writing is the way in which these tendencies in recent art and architectural praxis have arrived at diverse motivations and methodologies of 'critical spatial practice' that share in common a mobilisation of the varying capacities and mechanisms of 'agencing'. These types of practices are often characterised in their resistance to the notion of predetermined intent instead working *with* the problems that arise from multiplicity and

contingency. They often feature long term active and generative insertions into other circulatory structures outside the established field of cultural production, in particular the regulatory systems, parallel economies and resource networks of modern urban conurbations, and they often take place at a local level. Manoeuvring in this way has produced a kind of parallel axis of cultural production that enables modes of artistic and architectural praxis to emerge that question existing structures of knowledge production offering a compelling argument for taking seriously how theory and practice are actively co-constituted. Self-organised project platforms and collaborative initiatives that occur 'on the ground' feature strongly because they often develop a more symbiotic relationship between research, process and action.

More crucially for the purposes of this writing the particular aspects of how projects like this unfold offers the opportunity to pose a number of important questions about the concept and location of agency in spontaneous urban interventions and long(er) terms engagements with specific spatial conditions and relations. Agency in these examples might involve a more precise and laborious process of analysis that is attentive to the complex and at times unpredictable nature of intentionality and one that is alert to the challenges of tracing the instrumentality of power through multiple agents and sources of agency. An attempt to adopt this slower more attentive analysis is what follows.

An Ecology of Agencing

'Ecosystems are process, and ecology is less an objective, scientific discipline than a mode-and art-of thinking differently…'

(Verena Andermatt Conley 1997: p.103)

'What would happen to our thinking about politics if we took more seriously the idea that technological and natural materialities were themselves actors – were vitalities, trajectories, and powers irreducible to the meanings, intentions, or symbolic values humans invest in them?'

(Jane Bennett 2010 cited in Coole and Frost 2010: p.47)

My research sets out to refute the possibility of delineating the contours of our lived environment along social and natural lines. Situating my investigation in this way attention is given to a concern that resounds throughout this writing. This concern centres on how might it be possible to render legible the complexity and unpredictability of social natures that coalesce in urban spatialities. Seeking out an effective methodology to address this problem has initiated a number of productive encounters and alliances with contemporaneous theory and praxis that will be explored further in this chapter. Such encounters have brought into sharp focus the exigency for an ecological imaginary through which we might make sense of urban spatialities and the patterns of agency that unfold within them.

Such a mode of enquiry brings with it the challenge of working *with* a diverse range of entities and forces to formulate a self-consciously 'untidy' perspective on the contingency of urban subjects and environment(s). This has necessitated an engagement with a plurality of 'voices' that have emerged in recent years, each of which address this question from differing positions bringing with them their own subtle inflections. Identifying the converging interests around modes of eco-logical thought and new forms of political ecology that now exist across a number of disciplinary territories, this chapter attempts to facilitate critical dialogues between them and contemporary cultural developments. Adopting a more untidy perspective means putting aside our assumptions about exactly what constitutes the urban, about which of its components are capable of taking

part in its complex processes of agency and about what forces produce and reproduce the conditions and relations within its matrix.

One way of imagining such an untidy perspective is to switch for a moment from a reliance on the visual field as our principal mode of analysis and instead consider the character of urban spatialities drawing on other sense experiences. In this way we suspend an ocular viewpoint and instead opt to become more attentive to listening to, or sensing the city through the body. On the level of metaphor listening to the city produces a sensation of urban space replete with 'noise', a shift in our perception that might point the way to how we might reconsider its character in more eco-logical terms.[33]

In a research project initiated by artists Heather and Ivan Morison this 'noise' is poetically demonstrated in a field recording made whilst traversing one of the world's largest and most dynamic cities. Their year-long project *Global Survey* (2003) was made as a rambling journey across a number of continents where their direction and purpose was defined only by chance encounters and stop-offs suggested by those they met along their way. Spanning the Baltics in Eastern Europe to Eastern Asia and Oceania *Global Survey* (2003) was an expedition disseminated through radio broadcasts and a collection of printed cards and texts which documented their 'findings'.

One such broadcast features the field recording made during their time in Beijing, China. *Two Beautiful Java Sparrows in a Cage on the back of a Bicycle* (2003) was made whilst navigating the chaotic streets of the sprawling city. Travelling from their apartment to Tiananmen Square, this recording is a poetic rendering of the diverse forms of 'noise' that colour the landscape of our

---

[33] Michel Serres introduces a 'theory of noise' critiquing epistemological tradition. He advocates an unmasking of the illusion of unity and order brought about by modern rational thought. In its place Serres seeks ways in which we might think multiplicity. See Serres, Michel (1995) *Genesis* (trans. J. Geneviève and J. Nielson) Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. Following Serres Francesco Manacorda considers the idea that art and art discourse can manifest themselves as a kind of interference or 'noise machine', creating complex noise in channels of conventional communication. See Manacorda, Francesco (2007) 'Irreversibility, Dissipation, Chaos and Noise Machines' in Huleileh (ed.) *The Sharjah Biennial 8, Still Life: Art, Ecology and the Politics of Change* Sharjah: Museum of Art pp.56-60

urban spaces.[34] Listening to this recording we experience the cacophonic composition of the city, a texture of sound that whilst dominated by the incessant hum of human activity (transportation networks, passers-by, street trade, etc.) is also interwoven with the constant refrain of birdsong. The 'noise' merges background and foreground sources of sound blending each into a tapestry of interconnected movements through the cityscape. The resulting 'rhythms' hybridise the various sources of sound for the listener and stand in contrast to the discernibility of urban components apparent in the eye of the onlooker. Attuning our ear to these layers of 'noise' as this work does, it is not then difficult to imagine how we might begin to hear a whole range of other 'sounds' emitted from 'overlooked' examples of biodiversity or from other sources of 'natural' activity woven into our urban mechanics. By extension sensing the city in this way it becomes impossible to conceive of the collective bodies of urban citizens that inhabit it not being sustained by, or altered by the increasingly concealed bio-chemical flows of natural materials that circulate through urban spatialities. Sensing this 'noise' and these flows opens up potential strategies through which we might begin to render legible the complexity and unpredictability of social natures that coalesce in urban spatialities. In doing so we draw on a more explicitly ecological imaginary through we might develop this new perspective.

Urban Spatialities and Ecological Imaginaries

One of the most significant implications of opening up our understanding of urban space to a more ecological mode of thought, where the ecological is seen as an articulation of the permeable and overlapping boundaries between nature *and* society, is how it might create new trajectories for theorizing the complex political and ethical territories that unfold within socio-spatial assemblages and the processes of agency that govern their shapes and structures. It is an exploration of these territories, those that constitute, produce and reproduce urban environment(s) and subjects and the complex patterns of agency between them that this chapter attempts to undertake.

---

[34] This recording is available online at <http://morison.info/globalsurvey.html>

By questioning the overtly social composition of such assemblage building, we can begin to track the patterns that emerge from foregrounding the complex relational struggles and entanglements that occur between humans, non-humans and environment(s). This move can be regarded as an attempt to view socio-spatial assemblages from a non-dualistic perspective, or through an ecological imaginary. Thus avoiding the dualistic thinking that separates the natural from the social (the city from the countryside, the human from the environment) and instead recognising their tightly imbricated condition. Crucially, viewing socio-spatial assemblages in this way facilitates a transversal perspective across both spheres, one that recognises the potential of both to act upon or transform one another. However in formulating such an ecological imaginary we face an almost overwhelming challenge of negotiating ever more complex topologies of urban space, composed of the perpetual conflicts and evolving co-relations between natural and cultural components. In seeking a position outside of anthropocentric framing we are prompted to evaluate the 'roles' of heterogeneous components that are commonly overlooked in analyses of urban morphologies. This is however a vital and necessary endeavour considering the extent to which existing settlements between socio-economic forces and nature are becoming increasingly destabilised in a post-natural condition.

Tracking the potential of an ecological imaginary as a productive metaphor for establishing a more horizontal view of urban spatialities therefore means tracking the active rhizomatics[35] of the inter-connected processes of 'agencing'[36] that occur between multiple assemblages. Here, and in what follows the term agency is supplanted with the term 'agencing'. This is a strategic move carried out in order to emphasise the notion of agency as an interconnected process rather than a linear

---

[35] Rhizomatics refers to a horizontal system where connectivity can take place between nodal points in a non-hierarchical manner, in this context creating fluid lines between heterogeneous locations and entities. The rhizome is proposal for a mode of knowledge that is planar establishing connections across different milieu. This concept is outlined in the opening plateau 'Rhizome' in Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Felix [1987] (1996) A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia (trans. Brian Massumi) London: Athlone Press pp.3-25

[36] The term 'agencing' captures the sense that agency is situated, distributed and contingent. For further discussion using this term see Bogue, Ronald (2007) Deleuze's Way: Essays in Transverse Ethics and Aesthetics Aldershot: Ashgate, p.145

trajectory of action instigated by a single actor operating in isolation. It can also be seen as a way of forging a place for the role of other sources of agential capacity.

As Jane Bennett (2010) has already adeptly shown, what an agent is and what and agent can do is intrinsically tied to the series of encounters that take place between things. During the process of agency, or 'agencing,' action is distributed across a network of 'things' in a way where 'there is not so much a doer ... behind the deed… as a doing and an effecting by a human non-human assemblage' (Bennett 2010: p.28). In her widely noted text Bennett proposes an 'agency of assemblages' (2010: p.20), a conception of a dynamics of agency that attempts to go beyond the limitations of the agency versus structure debate that has dominated discourses in social and political science. Questioning the assumption that the 'social structures' that shape and constrain actors are merely the embodiment of human will and intention, she instead argues for the inclusion of non-humans as active participants in a broader political ecology. Favouring a vital materialism or the potential role of an active materiality therefore means that current political crises and problems cannot be adequately addressed without recourse to the 'crosscutting forces' of human/non-human assemblages. As Bennett has pointed out 'there was never a time when human agency was anything other than an interfolding network of humanity and non-humanity: today this mingling has become harder to ignore' (2010: p.31). Bennett's timely observations are illustrated with the agential role of such physical phenomena as electricity and food (two typically post-natural materials) in shaping and transforming the human environment and the human metabolism. Her analysis has profound implications as it points to the inadequacy of contemporary political discourse to provide a clear picture of accountability for, or reflexive solutions to, current social and environmental crises.

Drawing on such conceptions of active materiality and attempting to unseat the idea that the locus of agency is exclusively bound to the individual my writing opts for the use of the term 'agencing' over agency in order to denote a process that is highly contested, distributed and mediated across

a diverse collective of 'actors'. By creating a synthesis between a redefined notion of the ecological (as the permeable and overlapping boundaries between nature *and* society) and a recalibrated process of 'agencing' (across and between 'things') my intention is to establish a methodology through which we might locate or track the agential patterns left over from sources of cultural production. In this way an 'ecology of agencing' should be seen as a means of capturing the outcomes that occur as a result of the series of translations of agency between us and 'things'. Between our capacities to act and the capacities of other agents to transform or produce change themselves. Such an 'ecology of agencing' recognises that socio-spatial assemblages are not neutral spaces of action but are in fact spaces already permeated with a whole range of potential encounters between 'actors/actions' that represent conflicting wills, interests and contrasting ideologies.

The complex nature of multiple socio-spatial assemblages and the relationships that exist between them have already been identified and examined in some detail by Manuel De Landa (2006) in his bottom up analysis of societal structures. This is a perspective on society that seeks to reverse dominant models of analysis that begin the study of social organisations and formations of social power from the macro to micro scale. De Landa examines multiple scales and types of social assemblage from individuals to city states, identifying their individual components and operations and the web of relations that connect them to other assemblages. Crucial in his analysis and highly pertinent in the context of this writing is the manner in which patterns of agency can be tracked across differing scales of socio-spatial assemblage. What he posits is a dynamic agential geography where sources and affects of agency are distributed across these assemblages in ways that can cause intentional and unintentional affects at all scales. In other words 'agencing' is wholly contingent, change comes about in the fluid and unpredictable interplay between persons, inter-personal networks, communities, organisations, cities and nation states. As DeLanda puts it:

'…social mechanisms must include the full variety of causal interactions…we may acknowledge that individual actors are capable of making intentional choices, and that in some cases such intentional action leads to the creation of social institutions…while at the same time insist that the syntheses of larger social assemblages is many times achieved as the *collective unintended consequence* of intentional action' (2006: p.24).

Though conventionally agency and intentionality can be seen as located in the individual subject, where certain social agents are seen to occupy the role of harnessing the forces of change or instigating disturbances to the existing interactions of social mechanisms, this view is challenged by a more distributed or ecological view of 'agencing'. Building on the notion of distributed agency we need to take account of the full range of individual actors and the components of social assemblages through which agency is distributed. This is a move that requires letting go of pre-determined ideas about *who* or *what* can act, and what we might designate an active 'social' component. In an 'ecology of agencing' diverse individual actors and social assemblages become an unruly whole, a tangle of agential process only seen when we throw humans and 'things' together.

Such an 'ecology of agencing' therefore describes a highly complex over-determination, however such a condition does not negate the possibility of human agency any more than it dissolves the capacity of the representatives of dominant forces and ideologies to stabilise existing interests. Within this tangle some agential forces are still able to command a greater influence than others. This is perhaps exemplified in the current settlement that exists between dominant socio-economic forces and nature. However as discussed above the imbalances and tensions within this existing settlement are increasingly producing the conditions whereby the sustainability of such a settlement is itself under threat, and where the agential capacities of natural phenomena are becoming more tangible and keenly felt. Natural entities it seems are capable of producing unpredictable feedback within such an agential regime and equally they may have the capacity to produce or mediate outcomes desirable to, and undesirable to, post-capitalist forces in equal measure.

This more 'active' conception of materiality is increasingly visible to us in cases of natural perturbations and the way in which they become highly politicised, and at times even co-opted into programs of free-market expansion, social reform and urban reinvention. Natural disasters and environmental crises can produce immediate catastrophic effects on human population, technological infrastructure, forms of capital and economic productivity. However at the same time that such phenomena can produce violent and irreversible change, they can also, somewhat ironically, be seen to become active components in the often conflicting processes of socio-political resistance and post-capitalist expansion and control. Recent examples of tropical cyclones such as Hurricane Sandy which hit the U.S. in late 2012 and those that hit Bangladesh in 1991 and 2007 illustrate how extreme natural phenomenon can take on significant and somewhat unpredictable roles within an 'ecology of agencing'.[37]

Ecological perturbations, if thought through a re-interpreted form of the term ecological, would be understood as disturbances and transformations that take place in the existing dynamics of humans and non-humans. Such perturbations are therefore occurrences that profoundly affect the material conditions of socio-spatial assemblages and the relations between the array of entities that populate them. In the case of Hurricane Sandy, which struck New York and wide stretches of the East coast, these changes are highly visible in both the immediate and longer term changes brought to bear on the physical environment. However other more subtle processes of disturbance and transformation to the existing dynamics between things are less obvious, but are nevertheless equally significant. In the wake of the storm, news and financial analysts drew a number of conclusions about the social and economic implications of the shocking event. A consensus quickly emerged that although the hurricane was devastating in its immediate impact, even forcing the temporary closure of the New York stock market, it would ultimately provide positive economic opportunities. Recent history has demonstrated that devastation to

---

[37] The role of nature (such as natural disasters and material resources) in agential process, and in particular the shaping of geopolitical forces, nation states and social justice movements is explored by Nabil Ahmed in his narrative on the entanglement of socio-natural entities in modern Bangladesh. See Ahmed, Nabil (2013) 'Entangled Earth' in Demos, T.J. (guest ed.) (2013) *Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology Third Text*, Vol 27, Issue 1, Jan 2013 pp.40-53

infrastructure and real estate in the U.S. is often followed with state investment and profitable speculation through redevelopment projects.

What is interesting about Hurricane Sandy is the way in which it caused a reconfiguration of material components (such as water, sewage, mould, heavy metals and radioactive elements) in the existing dynamics between humans and non-humans. This reconfiguration has brought about an alteration to the material and social conditions in certain areas within and adjacent to the coastal zone of the city, especially along New York's waterfront. One does not have to look far to see how this reconfiguration has resulted in material entities insinuating themselves into a range of human activities and social realities. Their presence or participation in agential process can been seen in current revisions to New York's Waterfront Revitalization Program and changes to legislation governing urban waterfront development, in the management strategies of the city's distinctly post-natural Gateway Park and in the on-going community initiatives that seek to represent the rights of public housing residents exposed to a cocktail of potential health risks.[38] The ingress of sea water, along with other physical and chemical components has already acted on legal statute, conservation policy and advocacy for social justice. In each of these cases it becomes increasingly apparent that we are deeply imbricated with our material environment and that materiality is crucial to our understanding of agential process.

Throwing humans and 'things' together produces a conception of agential process that rests on a re-interpreted view of the ecological prompting us to consider firstly, that agency is understood as a process of change between all 'things' (ourselves included), and secondly that our environment(s) are seen as spaces in a constant cycle of being made and re-made *by* and *with* human subjects, living organisms, non-living matter and our rapidly changing technologies. Whilst all of the aforementioned entities can and do take on a significant role within processes of change it is the relationship between human subjects and non-humans in the form of non-living matter

---

[38] For more on this see for example http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/15/nyregion/new-building-codes-passed-after-lessons-from-hurricane-sandy.html?_r=0

(land, water) and living organisms (bio-forms) that are of central concern here. Set within a more expansive and multivalent field of action or (inter)action the nexus of agency (and intentionality) is therefore far more difficult to pinpoint or trace as it becomes dislocated and translated between 'things'.

The instability and unpredictability of such an 'ecology of agencing' of course has profound implications for any 'bodies' of action, cultural or otherwise, if indeed it is possible under such a description of agency to separate such 'bodies' anymore. Re-orientating our thinking about agency away from the centrality of individual agents or self-contained 'bodies' of action towards an 'ecology of agencing', that is de-centred and trans-positional, calls into question the notion that culture, society and nature can continue to be viewed as mutually exclusive territories. In the specific context of this discussion what this mental re-orientation also brings about is the need to undertake a more critical assessment of our assumptions about cultural agency and the operations of cultural work in the context of our lived environment(s).

With this in mind it is particularly productive to examine those forms of cultural production that already traverse lines of enquiry that spread across these increasingly super-imposed territories. The distinctly trans-disciplinary nature and set of operations that characterise critical spatial practice (crossing art, architecture, cultural activism, quotidian practices as well as theoretical re-framings of space) may be symptomatic of how certain contemporary cultural imperatives continue to seek out new methodologies of mobilising collective desires to alter or transform our subjectivities and our lived environment(s). Often in ways that intervene at various scales and registers to reformulate or reshape existing spatial relations and conditions, between urban subjects and their environment(s).

In this sense such a form of praxis may offer us critical insights into how and through what processes such reformulation and reshaping takes place on the ground. Furthermore they may

make visible the unpredictable dynamics of an 'ecology of agencing' by revealing, interrupting or reconfiguring the agential sequences taking place between the various actors, and across the various scales, that make up urban assemblages. In this sense an 'ecology of agencing' revealed by such praxis allows us to assess the ways in which conflicting trajectories of over-determining actions intersect at ground level. By circumventing the more consensual routes of intervention sanctioned by official culture or by re-routing processes of change or dissent to operate outside of, or in parallel to, existent bureaucratic channels spatial practice mobilises independent strategies of self-authoring and self-organised formations. Registering attempts to formulate the conditions whereby groups of individuals might more readily become agents of change (or agential) at both local and trans-local scales.

Formulating an 'ecology of agencing' as an unpredictable and complex over-determination between a diverse collective of actors does not, or should not be seen to inhibit human agency. Instead such a formulation demands more creative manifestations of 'taking control' or forging alignments that work to catalyse new agential sequences. Or more precisely if we consider such action *eco-logically*, spatial practice of this sort might be more accurately viewed as a manifestation of experimental initiatives whereby collectives of potential actors coalesce in order to test various degrees and duration of agential process. By exploring how such initiatives offer new insights into the agential sequences that unfold within the context of urban assemblages we might begin to map an 'ecology of agencing' within our socio-natural collective and reflect on the potential role(s) of cultural production in this process.

In particular what motivates this enquiry is a desire to examine the ways in which an emergent form of praxis, one manifested through a distinct disciplinary itinerancy and mode of collective production develop forms of knowledge and action that increase our understanding of how urban subjects and environment(s) are produced and re-produced within the context of post-naturalism. Through co-authoring strategies such praxis often operates in tandem with concomitant theory

sharing in common the desire to reformulate or recalibrate our assumptions and understanding of urban subjects and environment(s), orienting our thinking to follow a more eco-logical compass. In the work of contemporary thinkers and the case studies of aesthetic praxis examined below what is considered is how recent modes of thought and practice have increasingly problematized the view that the human subject and the 'environment' exist as separate and self-governing entities.

In this sense what I suggest is that theory and praxis have increasingly begun to co-constitute one another, operating as an aggregate of cultural creativity (and cultural agency), with each contributing in unique ways to the construction of novel 'constituencies', new configurations of components gathered from the diverse range of social-natural materials that make up, influence and give shape to our contemporary urban spatialities. Through the creation of such novel constituencies both thought and praxis can be seen to invoke a range of potentialities that can be brought about through the tentative, temporary and experimental process of drawing together heterogeneous components into non-normative compositions. A process that creates space to re-imagine, destabilise or reformulate dominant alignments between different actors. In this respect such creative improvisations produce both discursive and material tools for re-orientating and transforming our lived environment.

What remains of central concern in the context of this writing is how such tools might reveal and excavate the particularities of the uncertainties, instabilities and antagonisms inherent in our post-natural condition that are played out within the context of the perpetual reconfiguration of urban subjects and their environments. In seeking an answer to this attention is given to the spatial 'structures' and modes of 'sociality' that can emerge within the dynamics of socio-natural 'collectivity', tracing the distributions of tension/cohesion and agential process that such novel 'constituencies' generate. However we must be cautious not to make the assumption that such novel 'constituencies' instigated by thought and praxis occupy a privileged or autonomous position

outside of the kind of agential regime we have begun to formulate here. This is the case even if cultural work is considered as an umbrella for transgressive or micro-political action. In fact the tools that such cultural creativity may provide us are themselves derived from and subject to the existing conditions and machinations of such a regime.   Drawing together heterogeneous components into non-normative compositions through thought or praxis is therefore a 'production of difference' from what we have to hand. Thought may thus been seen to carry an agential capacity, but only when it is able to delimit not just our patterns of normative cognisance but also our habitual behaviours. Under such terms the agency of thought is achieved when it 'puts into' practice new programs of being and action.

Critical thought's agency or its ability 'to transform rather than describe' (Rendell 2006: p.8) stems from a refusal to restrict thinking and discourse to the role of producing an account of existing conditions (or existing agential alignments), the agency of thought is therefore found in the way in which it can be seen to facilitate new capacities to act.   Therefore if critical theory is to be considered as transformative (un-mapping rather than mapping) it must be able to reflect on and posit new alignments between things, a process that could catalyse new chains of associative actors/action. The agency of theory therefore lies in its ability to 'hot wire' agential sequences, a process which of course carries with it the very real possibility of numerous miss-fires. Theory like praxis, when it is seen as a process of un-mapping is often dependent on the capacities of human and non-human agents to align to 'move' thought in new directions or to break with epistemological orthodoxies.   Theory is itself articulated through a series of complicated translations between humans and objects (or discursive 'technologies' such as texts, images, maps, data and other re-presentations) just as praxis is subject to the current conditions and relations within our agential regime. What both theory and praxis may articulate is a collective cultural desire to construct 'new constituencies' whose experimental compositions become the forums through which we test varying degrees and duration of agential process.

Spatial practitioners be they 'specialists' or 'non-specialists' articulate such a desire in a complex and unstable 'ecology of agencing' that can distribute or even distort intentionality through conflicting or unexpected sources of agency and across multiple scales of urban assemblage. These collective processes or operations of 'agencing' are in fact already evident in the discussions of relationality (Massey 2005) in recent spatial discourse and in the networked compositions of action examined in more specific analyses of emerging forms of social and cultural praxis (Mörtenböck and Mooshammer 2008).

Relational, Networked and Ecological Agencies

In post-structural geographies relationality[39] maintains a heterogeneous character in the context of conceptualising the production of space. In relational space, space is no longer considered as possessing a predetermined form or structure, it is instead a product of the inter-relations and tensions played out between the diverse entities that occupy and flow through it. Space in these terms is 'put together' by relations, by the agreements and alignments that are reached between a multiplicity of entities, or from their disagreements and fractures. This relational making of space suggests an unstable, perpetual process of contestation, coercion and negotiation, a process of dissensus and consensus, characterized by assertions of power and dominance as well as forms of resistance and struggles for legitimacy. David Harvey (1996) has produced an account of spatial politics that seeks to reassert the centrality of 'place' in understanding complex urban topologies. In a condition of postmodernity where time-space is undergoing continual compression he attempts to reconcile the contradictory pressures exerted by global capitalism which simultaneously produces both a homogenisation and differentiation of space/place identity.

Unlike more structural conceptions of space such as the 'space of flows' or networks offered by Manuel Castells (1989), a conception in which the topology of space is determined by the effects

---

[39] Doreen Massey's description of space takes account of the unfixed nature of interconnectedness and the problems of attributing agency inherent in the notion of relationality, describing space as 'a sphere of possibility' see Massey, Doreen (2005) For Space London: Sage Publications

of global informational capitalism operating across nodes of simultaneous social practice that are no longer dependent on geographical contiguity, Harvey gives greater consideration to the specificity of place. In doing so he considers how the specificity of place, such as urban centres and regions, embody the conflicts that occur between the mobile subjects and forms of mobile capital that are attracted to them.

Following Harvey's analysis of a highly contested and perpetually changing spatiality, the use of the term 'space' is given a different inflection to refer to something that is dependent upon the diverse processes and relations that make it up. Space is not constructed from the outside but composed from the inside, by the heterogeneous entities and actions that take place within it. Space or the shape of space in these terms is not formed by underlying structures but by a range of dynamic interrelated processes (physical, social, cultural and natural) in complex interconnected socio-spatial assemblages. Space is fluid and is constantly made and remade depending on the relations formed, reformed or transformed between the various processes at work within it.

This is not to suggest that space has no physicality, Harvey talks of the 'spatial permanences' (1996: p.261) that are carved out of or formed (albeit temporarily) of the flows of processes that create space. Spatial permanences however solid and unchanging they may appear are always of course subject to change and are contingent upon the processes that sustain them. What Harvey suggests is that these diverse processes (social, natural, cultural) can over time stabilize into semi-permanent socio-spatial assemblages (or structures) that we commonly term place. Harvey leads us to view place as 'dynamic configurations of relative "permanences" within the overall spatio-temporal dynamics of ecological processes' (1996: p.294). The shape of 'space' (or place) is an expression of the dominant processes or relations between the social, natural, cultural and material entities that make up that space, or put another way the dominant configuration of relations (and we could add here the dominant processes of 'agencing'). Space is made by relations, made of shifting agreements and alignments between entities, those built on consensus

may often involve the exclusion of other entities and their relations leading to forms of contestation. This can be seen in the ways in which particular alignments of entities can come to dominate space and others can become marginalised, here we might think of the shifting relations/tensions that exist between the institutions and forces of socio-economic development, dominant and disenfranchised social groups and the natural environment.

We might also find it useful at this point to think of how such socio-spatial assemblages come into being and are in turn undone by the horizontal alignments between such diverse forces and agents. As it might equally well follow that just as spaces of capital evolve and sediment around the productive alignments between forces of socio-economic change and 'nature', those same spaces are subject to potential erosion and implosion by those same alignments as they come under various strains or as other forces and actors distort that alignment. In a similar way we might consider how novel or untested alignments between social groups and natural entities can be seen to both reshape (change) and reinforce (stabilise) dominant socio-spatial assemblages. This is often a complex multifaceted process that can appear to happen simultaneously and is often intrinsically tied to the specificity of locality.

In the case of the city of Seoul, South Korea, a recent urban regeneration plan (2001) for the Cheonggyecheon Stream and urban districts that surround it, (a project that is discussed at greater length later in this chapter), has exposed the some of the ways in which social and natural alignments have been forged in ways that produce contradictory effects on socio-spatial assemblages. The Cheonggyecheon Stream (literally translated as the 'blue stream') is now the site of an expansive urban recreation area in the centre of Seoul, with promenades, bridges and connective walkways that render the space into a legible system of movements and relations between its users. A decade ago this was a very different socio-spatial assemblage that testified to the unique conditions in which it was formed. Post-war development in the city of Seoul was marked by an urban informality and an unsanctioned 'growth' of residential and industrial

infrastructure. This pattern of spontaneous urban change had enabled the marginal groups forming around the city's main waterway to establish a space for new communities to form. Furthermore it provided the conditions for establishing viable parallel economies that would provide the necessary support to sustain them.

These tenuous socio-spatial conditions were founded on an exploitation of the material components of their immediate environment, principally the water system and the readily available supply of metals, the physical remnants of colonial occupation. Following liberation from Japanese rule at the end of 1945 abandoned manufacturing infrastructure and decommissioned military hardware produced a flow of machine parts and scrap metals brought into the area by street merchants and entrepreneurial metal workers. In the late 1950's following the Korean War Cheonggyecheon became a hub for independent small-scale industrial development. With the formation of specialist metal workshops local communities made a significant contribution to the foundation of post-war economic recovery in Seoul. This was a pattern that continued into the 1960's as machine parts and materials from further local conflicts (principally Vietnam) were aggressively traded and imported into the area.

As a result the communities that formed around the Cheonggyecheon Stream were often viewed as operating on the margins of legal enterprise with little or no official regulation. Despite this they were able to create sophisticated small scale manufacturing operations and diverse forms of street trade, including the then emerging electronics market. Such activities flourished up until the 1980's in the absence of local or state governance producing a distinct socio-spatial assemblage, one that threatened to destabilise the legibility of the city as a modern capital of business and commerce befitting an emerging democracy on the global stage. The communities of Cheonggyecheon had emerged from the mixing of disparate groups of migrants that had converged on the city from South Korea's hinterlands. Switching from agrarian practices to

manufacturing and trade in just a few generations the citizens of this district of Seoul had established a degree of autonomy, albeit a precarious one.

The ad-hoc nature of this autonomy was evident in the labyrinthine spatial formations in and around the Cheonggyecheon district. Furthermore the fragility of this autonomy was exposed as conflicting groups and forces sought to challenge the tenuous settlement that had been established between the working/living practices of local inhabitants and the urban environment. Both of these factors, the absence of urban conformity and the detrimental effects on environment (principally water pollution), were harnessed by dominant groups seeking to redraw the social, political and in this case physical landscape to reflect a new political and economic vision. One of the principle ways in which governance of this space was recouped by municipal authorities was through the Cheonggyecheon Restoration Project. This ambitious large scale urban redevelopment initiated in 2001 was founded on a motivation to reclaim the buried river system both physically and symbolically in order to transform both the social conditions of the area and the social relations between the city's inhabitants. The tensions that resulted from this attempt to police this space and reassert a legible socio-spatial configuration took place within the context of a 'consensual' urban politics that has as its foundation the dominant paradigms of late capitalist economics and urban sustainability.

Drawing on evocations of relational space such as this we begin to move away from an understanding of space as fixed and instead encounter it is as a series of fluid and unstable assemblages formed of the tensions and oscillations between the 'rhizomatic practices of everyday life and hierarchical systems of control' (Dovey and Polakit 2006: p.113). Relational space is seen as a 'sphere of possibility of multiplicity' (Murdoch 2006: p.20). Where inter-relations run through and compose and re-compose space, space is never closed or fixed, new relations cans always unfold, as Massey puts it 'multiplicity and space are co-constitutive' (1998 cited in Murdoch 2006: p.20). This re-appraisal of the power relations at work in space seeks to re-orientate the dynamics

of spatial politics across a different axis whereby 'vertical, hierarchical power assemblages (pouvoir) are replaced by horizontal, spatial assemblages (puissances) that enable social change' (Verena Andermatt Conley 1997: p.103). In this way it is possible to view the production of space as something that is subject to the collective processes or operations of 'agencing' between multiple assemblages and actors, where interweaving and converging relations might form new potentialities: conversely, it can be the space where new potentialities are 'flickered out of existence' (Thrift 2004: pp.81-103), by opposing sources or instruments of agency. In these relational conflicts space always retains the potential for ushering in new configurations of relations, just as it holds the very real possibility that existing consensual or coercive relations may be consolidated and strengthened, the potentiality of relational space should therefore be seen as doubled-edged in that it is '…made of multiple relations. These relations meet in space, at meeting places. There can be conflicts as sets of relations jostle for spatial supremacy. Equally there can be consensus as alliances are built and alignments are forged' (Murdoch 2006: p.22).

Massey highlights that some social groups may find themselves marginalised in this process due to the dominant relational configurations and alignments of groups, forces and entities that carve out spatial 'permanences' of order and control. Through the concept of the 'meeting place' she articulates the stakes of the uneven dynamics of the locus point where sets of relations converge, the precise dynamics of which are influenced by the various scales of power relations that run through space from the local to the global (1991: pp.24-29). This places the contestation of space within the framework of the differentiated mobility of individuals and the varying capabilities that individuals or organisations have to harness the forces or processes of 'agencing' to alter or disrupt the dominant hierarchical configurations of relations that order and control discrete places. As Massey acknowledges this harnessing of forces and agency is in no way a straightforward process, as the multiple assemblages that comprise both cities and states are often stratified and governed to support the hegemonic forces of privatization and capital. In this way both public and private

space has become codified by inter-connected hierarchical socio-spatial assemblages that have led to controls over access to and legitimate occupations of space, creating a bureaucratic spatiality where 'some people are more in charge of it than others, some initiate flows and movement, others don't' (Massey 1991: p.25-26).

We might ask then how, and to what extent such a recognition of the relational processes of 'agencing' can assist the development of new potentialities to actively 're-distribute' distributed intentional action in ways that that might establish new political and ethical territories? Mörtenböck and Mooshammer (2008) consider some of the challenges laid down by such a question by examining the new articulations of political and ethical territories opened up in the tensions and conflicts between the competing network formations that govern not only our city spaces but our contemporary regional and global topologies in a late-capitalist era. Networks, they argue have become the single most dominant form of spatial construction in the modern era, constituting both the spatial realities of our contemporary world and the processes through which these contested realities gain or lose topological influence.

Under such terms networked formations exist as 'a form of organisation, an operational politics and a generative process' governing 'new organisational and spatial patterns' and altering both the nature of agency (or agential process) as well as the production of webs of networked actors (or collective action) (Mörtenböck and Mooshammer 2008: p.15 and p.16). Recent forms of cultural production and reception have also become increasingly structured in this manner, catalysing new spaces and operations for cultural work. Spatial practice in particular often manifests itself in this way, allowing it to occupy the interstices between cultural and social 'spaces' and local and global scales embodied in our contemporary urban spatialities. The operations of such networked formations expose to view a politics of space that has been brought into being as a result of the paradoxical condition of spatial construction in our contemporary era. This is a condition whereby urban spatialities and the patterns of agency within them take shape through the tension or

perhaps more accurately, the torsion that exists between the sanctioned policies of deregulation inherent to late capitalism and the exertion of state sovereignty and influence particular to neo-liberalist politics.

Against this backdrop network formations operate in fluid territories and across variable and contingent pathways, rendering them capable of producing unpredictable affects across local and global scales. In other words such a form of collective action, or 'networked action' is not always easily instrumentalised by horizontally orientated social forces. Network formations do not simply transfer instruction or intentional action from one place to another. In this way they must be seen as part of an inherently unstable process of action where 'agency refers to a morphological process' and agencing occurs between multiple 'things' and across multiple scales' (Mörtenböck and Mooshammer 2008: p.249). Intentional action is thus 'passed along' network formations, along a complex line of actors and mediators and as a consequence can be re-routed and redirected to produce unpredictable and even oppositional outcomes.

Such a view anticipates the role of an array of diverse actors and offers a way of thinking through the changing nature of political action and the role that cultural production might have within it. The specific nature of complex networked formations and the morphological character of agency within them give rise to a more sophisticated and perhaps more pragmatic understanding of human action and the degree of influence that we might still exert over on-going processes of change. Acknowledging the attenuated nature of human agency within our environment(s) foregrounds the reciprocity that exists between agency and structure but for some may pose an uncertainty about the efficacy of human-centred intentional action within such connective dynamics.

Within the logics of network formations what Mörtenböck and Mooshammer demonstrate is that such a situated and transformative process of agencing presents us with is the challenge of

ascertaining the locus of agency and the potentialities it enables for effective forms of collective resistance. The morphological character of agency within such networks presents itself in ways where 'the difficulty consists in demonstrating how a certain autonomy of concrete action can establish itself within the structure of this process and how political possibilities thereby emerge' (Mörtenböck and Mooshammer 2008: p.249). Most importantly though it does not negate this possibility and significantly it opens the way for a reflection on the range of 'other' actors that can influence this morphology.

Although we have seen in discussions of relational space and network formations, space should not be seen as fixed in that it always maintains the potential for new relations to emerge, there still exist significant factors that constrain individuals and social groups from forging new alliances and alignments that attempt to resist or disturb the interactions between dominant multiple (social/bureaucratic) assemblages. What is less clear is how new relations might unfold and existing ones might falter within an ecology of 'agencing' between multiple actors and across multiple assemblages. The challenge here is to examine what occurs in the inter-connecting processes of 'agencing' between multiple assemblages, especially those 'agencing' events around which social and non-human entities coalesce. This effort draws attention to the diverse entities that are enlisted in the heterogeneous composition of human agency and the ecology in which it is dispersed.[40]

---

[40] Sarah Whatmore proposes not only a relational understanding of space but a need to move towards a 'relational ethics' between natural and social actors, see Whatmore, Sarah (2002) Hybrid Geographies: Natures, Cultures, Spaces London: Sage Publications

Eco-Politics, Urban Environment(s) and Urban Subjects

Eroding the metaphorical dimension of an ecological imaginary we might come to see how these heterogeneous entities can be seen to 'participate' in the dynamics of space as hybrid collectives, collectives formed of both social and natural entities. What the 'presencing' of these collectives may bring into view are examples of how residual Modernisms continue to percolate prescribed homogenous solutions to spatial problems. Such homogenising forces are a common feature of late capitalism often working to erode local identities and distinctive political cultures. An ecological imaginary thus becomes a productive tool for questioning how urban subjects and environment(s) are formed and reformed under such conditions. Where it becomes particularly useful is when it is used as an instrument for guiding our attempts to imagine new modes of agency and formations of 'parallel' communities that question an exclusively *social* composition to urban spatialities. Following concepts derived from eco-politics,[41] we might begin to consider socio-spatial assemblages as conflicting formations of social *and* natural processes. Eco-politics is characterised as a mode of thought that attempts to de-centre the human subject and to consider the ecological character of human social life and the production of subjectivity. For Timothy Morton (2007 and 2010) it can also be understood as a way in which we might think ecology or eco-logically without recourse to the overriding determination of the concept of nature.

Following Rousseau's notion of the social contract Michel Serres (1995) calls for a radical reassessment of thought and knowledge built on the foundations of a nature-social dichotomy. Serres argues against the existing perception of a clear separation between the human world (society) and the non-human world (nature). His move reverses the anthropocentrism that has pervaded modern thought, seeking to downplay the 'humaness' of being human. Instead Serres sets out to show that what defines us as what we are is in fact our embeddedness in ecological

---

[41] For an expansive and sustained account of the influence of ecological thought on contemporary ideas see Conley, Verena Andermatt (1997) Ecopolitics: The Environment in Poststructuralist Thought London: Routledge.

systems. Serres' new ecological concept, (which takes as it's basis the etymology of the term concept or con-cipiere, meaning to grasp together or bind together) can be viewed as a bold attempt to chart a more radical contractual equality between the two globalities[42] of nature and society. In this way human society would no longer be positioned as disembodied or disengaged from the sphere of nature. The aim of such a contract would be to democratize or 'horizontalize' the position of humans within the overall scheme of things. Such a radical re-positioning of the human subject not only calls into question our established polity it also challenges ideas about the reciprocity between subjects and environment(s). Under the terms of such a contract the existing polity would have to undergo a significant revision.

Serres himself asserts that the word 'politics' is no longer an adequate term to apprehend the complexity of interactions that occur between the two globalities. The term politics for him is too firmly associated with the polis or social world. More specifically it is only able to capture the 'administrative organisation of groups' within the city-state (Serres 1995: pp.43-44). Instead his natural contract attempts to conceptualise a broader horizontally orientated political ecology forcing humanity out of its conceits and compelling forces of governance to 'go outside the streets and walls of the city' (Serres 1995: p.44). What is not made clear in Serres account however is how the physical/material embodiment of human society in the form of the city, might figure in this revised contract. In fact his disregard for the city risks reasserting its (and therefore society's) antithetical position to nature. Urban spatialities have since the nineteenth century become the primary site of modern human social organisation. The acceleration of urbanisation processes that have taken place in the last two centuries have produced the conditions whereby more than half of human society is now manifested in the form of cities and city-states. In this context we have to evaluate whether such a contract can be forged without recognising the deep imbrication of social

---

[42] Assad refers to the urgency for reconciling the divisions between the two globalities of nature and culture in her analysis of Serres' proposition for a natural contract, see Assad, Maria L (1999) Reading with Michel Serres: An Encounter with Time Albany: State University of New York Press pp 149-162.

and natural processes that are at work within urban spatialities, and the 'co-constituential' politics they signal.

In a similar eco-centric manoeuvre Felix Guattari's now widely discussed *Les Trois Écologies* ([1989]2000) sees humans as being located within complex systems of relations that are constantly changing. His response to this is to develop a notion of eco-subjectivity or ecosophy that unfolds in a space of multiplicities and emergent relations from micro to macro scales. What is important to note here is the particular conjunctive between the natural and the cultural in what might usefully be termed an ecology of 'house and mind' (as the root of the word eco suggests). This outwardly directed model of human subjectivity can be mapped in his tri-partite vision of mental, social and natural ecologies which evolved through his own encounter with the information theory of Gregory Bateson in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (1972). Guattari's ecosophy has been characterised by Verena Andermatt Conley as the construction of three synchronous ecological registers whereby 'mental ecology deals with the passages and circulations of affect before translation into rigid codes, social ecology extends the former into selective practices and natural ecology extends those practices into nature and intersects with organisations of flora and fauna'(1997: p168). Conley articulates both the interconnection between these registers and the emphasis that Guattari seems to place on the production of subjectivity. In effect what he proposes is the idea of a 'mobile subject', one that is open to the affective potential of three overlapping and interdependent ecological territories (Guattari 2000: p.68). Mental ecologies take place in the arena of thought, and the capacities we possess to produce new virtual worlds, generating dynamic assemblages between ourselves and our ecological territories.

Under these terms eco-politics should engender a 'flight' from dominant forms of habitual thinking and behaviour, reconstructing subjectivities through an affective and relational engagement with ecological space. In this conceptualization human subjectivity is not autonomous and immutable instead we are always in the process of becoming, bound to relations of various kinds, we are

within *an ecology* of relations. The human subject is an assemblage at the micro level linked to assemblages at the macro level, the individual is thus 'like a transit station for changes, crossings and switches' (Genosko 2005: p.8). In this sense the three ecologies exist in a state of finely balanced connection where modulations at each level can be felt at other levels, reflecting how in Guattari's conception of the production of human subjectivity 'earthly spheres, social tissues and worlds of ideas are not compartmentalized' (Genosko 2005: p.5).

The locus and engine of a Guattarian ecosophy though is to be found in his attempts to liberate subjectivity, to enrich it, radicalize it, and find new potential in the processes that govern the formation of the subject. What is interesting to see is the extent to which this psycho-therapeutic bent to his work is premised on the dissolution of boundaries between nature and culture. On one level Guattari's 'mobile subject' is one that can be seen to emerge from the permanent exchange or reciprocal modification between subject and environment. On another level he negates the possibility of conceiving of a pristine and untouched 'nature' by recognizing that 'environment' is something that is perpetually modified, in this case by the subjects/objects it 'houses', of which humanity has become the dominant group.

In many ways his three ecologies can be read as an attempt to reconcile the perceived imbalances of this delicate ecology, of particular concern to him is the homogenizing effects of the forces of capital on the formation of socio-natural environments and human subjectivity. These effects permeate mental and social ecologies from an array of sources in such a way that the 'universes of technoscience, biology, computer technology, telematics and the mass media…destabilize our mental coordinates on a daily basis' (Guattari 1995: p.119). Finding the means to overcome or resist such forces locks Guattari into a struggle to imagine ways in which a resistance to this dominance can be formulated and where habitual subjectivities are no longer left 'ignorant of difference and alterity'. (Guattari 1995b: p.133). For Guattari the production of subjectivity is therefore *the* primary site of contestation of all the three ecologies as it harbours the potential to

enact a form of resistance carved out through experimental 'ways of being' and 'ways of interacting' in our environment that create new priorities and new ethical programs between 'things' .

Guattari's revolutionary project for the 'production of subjectivity' is therefore understood as processual, political as well as ecological one, formed from a set of interactions in a continuous network of connective possibilities that are at once ethical and aesthetic. His account of subjectivity is one that is 'multivalent and polyphonic' (O'Sullivan 2005: p.88) where our production as subjects takes place within a complex web of mental, social and cultural ecologies. This conception is attuned to the problems that 'nature' or living systems press upon us, as individuals existing within a community of other subjects, and within an environment rich in potential forms of expression. The production of subjectivity is a political project in that it emphasizes the need to connect with an outside (to the 'other' or to alterity in other forms) through social relations (forms of collective enunciation) and through means of expression (forms of aesthetic rupture in our habitual being). This rhizomatic emphasis in Guattari's ecological conception of the production of subjectivity is also a move to, connect the process of production of ourselves as subjects within a logic of difference and creativity or what he terms an 'ethico-aesthetic paradigm' (Guattari 1995b).

The new aesthetic paradigm that Guattari proposes is not as he makes clear the 'aestheticization of the socius' (1995: p.134), for him the essential quality of the aesthetic is its trans-mutational renewal of sense/experience. The capacity of the artwork to speak of the world and ourselves differently is what he terms its role as 'partial enunciator', where an aesthetic event begins to involve itself in the reshaping of subjectivity, as a 'mutant production of enunciation' (Guattari 1995: p.131). It is this quality that he seeks to harness. For him employing this quality or faculty results in the continual re-composition of the work of art as well as our conceptions of ourselves and the collectives that we form. Under a Guattarian treatment the aesthetic thus translates into

a model through which other human activities may benefit, from the formation of processual subjectivities and renewed system of education to the founding of a new political praxis. His concern with art lies with its aesthetic operations, and how they might provide a useful and productive tool for imagining and actuating new forms of experience, creating new 'assemblies' of perception and relation, or transforming the ways in which we occupy and interact with our milieu.

Guattari's new ecosophical approach can be seen as a way of becoming more attentive to the relations between living systems articulated through a two-fold structure of the ethical and the aesthetic. The production of subjectivity is at once an ethical and aesthetic process, an opening out to difference, and a production of difference, understood in this way the 'ecology and ethology of subjectivity implies a kind of self-construction or self-organisation, a certain auto-cohesiveness' (O'Sullivan 2005: p.91), that is a creative process emerging from a nature-culture continuum, as an 'autopoiesis'. Following the work of biologists and philosophers Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, Guattari uses and expands the term 'autopoeisis' to encapsulate the paradox of the autonomic and dependant aspect of human subjectivity. Autopoiesis (from the roots *auto* or self and *poiesis* meaning poetry or making) can be defined as the 'self-making' and 'self-renewing' principles of organisation in living beings. More specifically it represents their capacity to 'auto-produce', set against in the first instance, their need to call upon and modify the resources of their environment, and secondly the necessity to modify themselves in response to perturbations from the environment.[43] In naming the dynamics of the production of subjectivity as an autopoeitic process Guattari (1996a: p.195) maps a new material conception of ourselves as producer/products in a nature-culture continuum. Nature and culture are not severed in his re-

---

[43] The term now figures widely in a range of discourses outside of the field of the biological sciences, such as social and organisational theory. For an extensive discussion of this concept in its original context see Maturana, Humberto R. and Varela Francisco J. (1980) *Autopoiesis and Cognition: The Realisation of the Living* Dordrecht: D. Reidel and Maturana, Humberto R. and Varela Francisco J. (1992) *The Tree of Knowledge: The Biological Roots of Human Understanding* Boston and London: Shambhala

imagining of the ways in which we are produced as subjects rather they shown to exist on the same axis.

Though Guattari clearly gives weight to the notion of a revised mental ecology and ruminates extensively on the importance of the micro or molecular level in shaping other ecological registers, he also attempt to sketch out the dynamics of inter-subjective human interactions, those that take place between individuals and collectives. Social ecology is seen as the arena of social relations and political mobilization including the everyday practices of citizenship. We might interpret his social ecology as the process through which social bonds and practices can be transformed in ways that are responsive to, reflexive to, and even subject to ecological change. This may take the form of modifications or complete reinventions of the ways in which we live together. A social ecology is thus shaped by the eco-praxes that have evolved from the mental forays into ecological territories by nascent subjectivities. The emphasis is therefore placed on emerging forms of collectivity and a reconsideration of social responsibility and our relationship to nature. In other words a more dynamic and evolutionary approach is required if we are to recalibrate the relationship between subjects and the relationship between subjects and environment.

Just how and under what conditions these collectives of nascent subjectivities might be formed is not immediately apparent especially given the 'increasing uniformity of the life of individuals in the urban context' (Guattari 1995b: p.132). In contemporary urban spatialities the means of 'reconstituting collective means of communication and action' is increasingly problematic given the shrinking public domain, and the restricted access to the 'spaces' that constitute a public polity. Also the extent to which 'new assemblages of collective enunciation' premised on 'trial and error experiments' (Guattari 1995b: p.120) or self-organised ventures in social organisation might productively combine/expand on a scale significant enough to present a challenge to dominant socio-political practices is dependent on successfully carving out 'other' spaces of action and other agential possibilities between different actors. The challenges of initiating such forms of resistance

in the physical spaces of urban spatialities are considerable and criticism could be leveled against Guattari's project for its utopic call to remake the world. However the experimental form of eco-praxis that he proposes raises a challenging question - with what might a new political ecology be forged?

Guattari's *Les Trois Écologies* ([1989]2000) can be read as a reformulation of the world predicted on a unification of nature and culture, that merges the biosphere and the mechanosphere into an entangled whole or a 'machinic' ecology. Through this expanded eco-logical concept Guattari pushes past an essentialised view of an untainted nature claiming that a recognition of this entanglement will generate examples of eco-criticism that are more sophisticated 'transversal' interventions in thought. Such conceptual manoeuvring advances the idea that we are in effect organism *and* environment (organism in an environment which is constantly changing), and that the environment or life-world in which we exist is increasingly a bio-technical, human/non-human construction. Invoking a machinic ecology therefore means that we can no longer engage with the idea of discreet natural entities but would instead understand that such entities are situated within a more complex assemblage. Such an assemblage is one that produces unpredictable feedback loops between subjects and environment or where 'any change to our physical environment, whether large or small, has a collateral impact on the social body' and vice versa (Baum 2010: p.11). Guattari's ecosophical approach seen in retrospect is clearly shaped by his own attempts to ferment effective forms of political resistance to late capitalism or an 'integrated world capitalism' that is increasingly 'delocalized and deterritorialized to such an extent that it is impossible to locate its sources of power'(2000: p.6). Guattari's notion of 'machinic' ecology recognises the pressures exerted on the environment by techno-scientific alignments with, and transformations of, nature. His response to this growing conflict or disequilibrium in the 'machinic' ecology is a call to 're-orient technology towards humanity' (Conley 1997: p.96). One of the ways in which this might be achieved is for eco-logical thought to become 'orientated toward

the future rather than a nostalgic past' (Conley 1997: p.150), incorporating the advancing edges of technological and scientific progress into wider discourses and other disciplines in order for it to be understood (and used) in relation to humanity and nature. Such a goal perhaps underestimates the extent to which techno-science has become embedded in the operations of dominant forces and instrumentalised in forms of social control.

The speed of change that has occurred since the publication of *Les Trois Écologies*, written in 1989, in for example the bio-sciences, digital and communications technology and agri-business, present significant challenges to the potential for eco-subjects and eco-praxes to emerge that enable either effective political resistance or transversal interventions. Melinda Cooper (2008) has surveyed the emergence of distinct bio-economies in North America and Western Europe in the last two decades, where bio-tech industries are proliferating as an anti-dote to the limitations of growth imposed by nature. This explosion of bio-technological solutions to economic problems, chiefly the transition from industrial to post-Fordist economies has produced a plethora of bio-scientific practices such as genetic patenting, transgenics and bioremediation. Alongside these changes geo-physical analysis technologies such as satellite and seismic scanning have been instrumental in heralding a neo-colonialism in the global south in the form of profitable land grabs. With such significant changes it is yet to be seen how Guattari's ecosophy might be constituted effectively twenty years on.

Despite the difficulty of reconciling eco-political thought with exponential urban growth and an expanding bio-economy such a project of critical re-imagineering still has currency today. What Serres (1995) and Guattari's ([1989]2000) writings offer are ways of thinking outside of the notion of nature as culture's 'other', providing an impetus for viewing our life-world as the product of conflicting formations of social *and* natural processes. In other words from an eco-political perspective urban subjects and environment(s) would be constituted as sets of complex socio-natural relations that co-determine one another, in a hybrid collective of 'things'. Moving to a

condition of hybridity is thus an attempt to re-site our understanding of socio-spatial assemblages to a place where human actions and human communities are already entangled within a multiplicity of associations with non-human entities. In advocating a hybrid collective we are prompted to ask what kind of relations and what kinds of politics are produced in these socio-spatial assemblages that no longer separate the spheres of nature and society. And what potentialities might be unlocked when we engage this hybrid collective in our theoretical framings and our everyday practices?

Moving beyond a description of socio-spatial assemblages predicated on the relationality of social phenomena alone, urban spatialities can instead be posited as possessing a distinctly hybrid character, where urban space might be imagined as a series of interconnected, conflicting human and non-human processes and forces. Or put another way the urban may be viewed as a complex material collective that is stabilized and de-stabilized by shifting enrolments, as action is mediated or transformed between diverse human and non-human actants. The term 'actant' is used in exchange for the term 'actor' to draw attention to the concept of a collective or 'delegated' agency spun out across a diversity of entities. The urban viewed in this way promises a dissolution of the 'two-house' politics (Latour 2004: p.13) of nature and society. It also signals the establishment of a political ecology that aims to, following Bruno Latour 'convoke a single collective' (2004: p.29), it also enables us to re-formulate existing modes of agency and re-imagine the broader assemblages of nature and society in a more relational or ecological manner that in turn demand a reconsideration of the ethical territories on which we situate human action.

Hybrid Spatialities and Hybrid Agencing

Whilst productive encounters continue to take place between eco-centric thought and social theory, in recent discourse on the city less attention has been placed on an exploration of the position of nature and culture within relational or eco-logical socio-spatial assemblages. In this sense there remains a predominance of socio-spatial conceptualisations that have not taken sufficient account of the diversity of processes that abound and come into conflict within one another in the 'social realities' of urban life. However this is something that is beginning to change as thinkers turn to ways of envisioning urban spatialities in the context of a more polymorphous materiality. The urban as an entanglement of diverse material entities and forms has begun to be reconsidered as a human and non-human construction, taking on a distinctly hybrid character.[44] Urban spatialities thought in this way are thus the product of hybrid collectives, formed from the effects of complex social and natural interactions. This condition of hybridity is what shapes contemporary urban environment(s) and the kinds of subjects that inhabit them, operating through a politics of connectivity between cultural and natural processes.

The notion of the hybrid or 'cyborg city' is one that has recently been taken up and developed by a number of geographers and urbanists, most significantly in the work of Gandy (2000), Kaika (2005) and Heynan, Kaika, and Swyngedouw (2006). Hybridity has also become the lens through which certain conceits about our understanding of nature in relation urbanity can be analysed as in the work of Whatmore (2002) and Hinchcliffe (2007). What such conceptualisations offer is a way of grasping the material complexity of urban spatialities and the feedback that takes place between humans and environment. In this way an anthropomorphic view of the city as the material embodiment of the socius gives way to a distinctly hybrid characterisation of a 'more than human' model of urbanity that validates the notion that 'all socio-spatial processes are invariably also

---

[44] In some examples of recent discourse the term 'more-than-human' has been used in favour of 'non-human' in an attempt evade the negativity associated with the term and to reach further outside the human realm. For further discussion see Braun, Bruce (2005) 'Environmental Issues: Writing a more-than-human Urban Geography', *Progress in Human Geography, 29*: pp.635

predicated upon the circulation and metabolism of physical, chemical, or biological components' (Heynan, Kaika and Swyngedouw 2006: p.12). Furthermore it endorses the participation of material forces in the agential dynamics of urban spaces where 'non-human "actants" play an active role in mobilizing socio-natural circulatory and metabolic processes', something that can be seen to produce both positive and negative effects (Heynan, Kaika and Swyngedouw 2006: p.12).

In recognising this hybridity we might be better equipped to understand the dynamics of an environment that is simultaneously undergoing a series of transformations initiated by human actions *and* producing a series of effects that transform us.[45] William Cronon (1991) constructs a compelling account of how socio-natural processes shaped the city and economy of Chicago. In his environmental history of the urbanisation process in the mid-west of America he links the material flows of grain from the socio-natural landscape surrounding the city to the accumulation of capital and the emergence of the futures market. In a similar treatment of our reciprocal relationship with the environment Timothy Mitchell (2011) has tracked the evolution of, and threats to, modern democracy and how such a paradigm of political life has been modelled around and transformed as a result of the transition from 'old' (coal) to 'new' (oil) carbon based economies. His analysis maps a series of distinct correlations between the intensity of material flows (of coal or 'buried sunshine'), its physical movements in narrow pathways and the accumulation of human labour and emancipatory politics emerging at its edges.

In taking on the idea of hybridity we might begin to see how the production of urban subjects and environment(s) are mediated by and through a range of 'materials' from what we commonly call the social, cultural and natural spheres. In other words urban subjects and environment(s) are not discrete and autonomous entities, rather they are permeable and open to eco-logical fluctuations. Physical matter, organic matter and other living organisms are all materials that are folded into and can act upon the construction of 'social realities'. Hybrid collectives are open and dynamic

---

[45] for an excellent overview of this field and the relations between human societies, cultures and matter see Simmons, I.G. (1979) *Biogeography: Natural and Cultural* London: Edward Arnold

systems that are in a perpetual process of stabilisation and de-stabilisation between social, natural and cultural materials. If urban landscapes are seen as external to ecosystem function, then cities will always be envisioned as configurations of social 'materials' only, as the physical manifestation of social bonds and social structures. In contrast the notion of the hybrid collective opens up city spaces to the affects of non-human entities, and considers them as active in the processes and production of the urban matrix. Rather problematically though this presents us with a challenge as to how we map the degrees of affectivity that occur between these diverse entities. If hybrid collectives are constituted of changing relations between material, social, cultural and natural entities, we need to ask where the nexus of agency is in these relational imbroglios?

Responses to this problem have already initiated an abandonment of setting the social agent outside the context of action and established fertile terrain for re-imagining the apprehension of agency in such complex hybrid collectives. Here we might think of the concept of agency attended to in 'actor networks'.[46] Focusing on tracing the connections between things as opposed to studying structures Actor -Network Theory (ANT) examines the locus of agency in relation to subjects and the material world, of what constitutes social life.[47] Subjects (humans) are conventionally attributed agency in relation to materiality and the non-human world. In philosophical terms the subject exists as a special kind of object. Following Serres (1995) a more complex relationship between human and non-humans is proposed by Latour (2005). Objects become quasi-subjects in a network with users, objects are deferred agency by their users, agency is exchanged and 'translated'[48] between and through complex arrays of subjects and objects.

---

[46] Actor-network theory (ANT) emerged from the specific context of anthropological analyses of science practices and has since exerted an influence on social research moving beyond micro and macro accounts of socio-spatial realities. For a expansive overview of ANT, its critics and its ongoing influence see Law, J. and Hassard, J. (eds.) (1999) Actor Network and After Oxford: Blackwell and Latour, Bruno (2007) Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory New York: Oxford University Press

[47] Latour himself has irreverently rejected the term actor-network theory suggesting a more useful alternative might be 'actant-rhyzome ontology'. For more on his ambivalence and perhaps his eventual acceptance of the term see Latour, Bruno (2007) Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory New York: Oxford University Press p.9

[48] Translation here is used to refer to a form of displacement or mediation the results in the creation of new link that modify both the subject and the object.

In this conception the production of modern socio-natural hybrids in the form of, for example, bio-technologies and urban natures would involve the distribution of agency across human and non-human actants. The 'production of a common world' as Latour calls it (2004: p.141) acknowledges the 'situatedness' of human action and human subjectivity and the porosity of the boundaries that separate the spheres of the natural and the social. In the context of urban space we might also think of the porosity between what we consider natural and constructed environments, here it becomes increasingly difficult to define the edges of where nature ends and society begins as David Harvey points out in his assertion that 'that there is nothing unnatural about New York City' (1996: p.28). Defining humanity, human relations and human constructions outside of the environment is always problematic. Human social and psychological changes are often in-separable from environmental factors; just as human constructed environments emerge from socio-natural interactions.

Proliferations of hybrid entities increasingly blur social and natural boundaries, a point that Latour (1993) himself is quick to draw our attention to in his analysis. In actor networks 'actors' can only act in concert with others, they only act if those other entities within the network conduct actions that are aligned with the 'actor'. In this way action is distinctly relational, it can only take place if successful agreements or alignments have taken place between actors (made up of human and non-human entities). These alignments or enrolments of entities are according to Latour (2005) common features of everyday socio-spatial life. If certain actors (entities) are removed from the network the actions are threatened and either new enrolments must be made, or the alignments between actors and entities can change to produce new actions and operations. Thus all entities have power (both human and non-human). This conception of action calls for a more symmetrical perspective on potential actors. Both humans and non-humans have the ability to perform operations that can have implications for the network as a whole.

In Latour's analysis socio-spatial identities are shaped by the inter-relations of multiple actors and entities, space and social structures are 'made' out of relations of various kinds that span both the socio and natural spheres. This opens up a consideration of urban space as a co-existence of human and non-human entities in complex relations, the city as hybrid collective. It also releases a potential for examining the complex ways in which urban spatial configurations are shaped by alignments and re-alignments of human and non-human entities. In particular, the ways in which the hybrid collective of the city is shaped by the shifting alignments of socio-natural entities, or put another way, through the dynamics of flows and circulations of social, natural and cultural materials. In giving shape to the city in this way we may ask what tensions do critical spatial practices reveal between human and non-human 'actants' and how might they institute new configurations of collectivity between them? By examining case studies of such praxis within an 'ecology of agencing', which means examining both their operations and the context of those operations, we might be able to begin to formulate effective responses. In addition focus can be placed upon the ways in which the entities that make up this collective are mobilised through cultural production, looking at how aesthetic praxis initiates new spaces and operations for cultural activity as forms of eco-political struggle. By examining the processes of generation, change, adaptation and the settlements that are made between natural, social and cultural materials the 'populations' and 'actions' of hybrid collectives may begin to emerge.

Developing a non-deterministic view of human societies and the complex processes that have produced semi-stable socio-spatial forms such as food webs, economies and cities, Manuel De Landa proposes that 'cities arise from the flow of matter-energy' (1997: p.28) urging a rethinking of how we might imagine and 'put together' the compositions and active components of urban collectives or assemblages. Following De Landa's envisioning of the city, the urban conurbation is a networked composition whose perimeters are not defined simply by the highly visible infrastructural elements at its centre that appear to recede at its edges. In order to apprehend the

full nature of the city we must take on board the notion that the city is a composite that is given physical shape and patterns of dynamics through a process of mixing multiple manifestations of materiality. Understanding this composite nature requires a wider purview of the city that encompasses a latitudinous perspective and the recognition of material capacities and affordances, as DeLanda proposes '…an assemblage analysis of urban centres must take into account not only town and countryside, but also the geographical region they both occupy. This region is an important source of components playing a material role in the assemblage' (2006: p.105). In other words we must imagine urban conurbations or urban spatialities as the result of the changing aggregations of materiality or more precisely the shifting processes, settlements and stabilisations brought into being, and to bear through the interaction of socio-natural entities. Following this line of thought the city is manifested *in* and *of* its physical environment whereby as DeLanda would suggest 'the geographical site and situation of a given urban settlement provides it with a range of objective opportunities and risks, the exploitation and avoidance of which depends on interactions between social entities (persons, networks, organisations) and physical and chemical ones (rivers, topsoil, mineral deposits)' (2006: p.105).

What emerges in his materialist analysis is a description of how flows of matter and energy are pivotal in shaping a wide range of socio-natural structures, that in turn once stabilised, attempt to maintain their solidity by controlling or constraining these flows of matter and energy, as an example we might look to the relationship (or relational conflicts and tensions) between the foundation and expansion of cities on the one hand and the flows of resources that structure and sustain it– such as inorganic matter, biomass and water on the other. Urban landscapes therefore cannot be conceived of as constructions of social 'material' alone, we cannot neatly separate human social developments and relations from nature within urban formations. The hybrid collective of the city should therefore be seen as a site of diverse interactions between social, natural, physical and cultural entities, following Swyngedouw's analysis 'the city, in its parts and as

a whole, is a kaleidoscopic socio-physical accumulation of human/non-human imbroglios' (Swyngedouw 2006b: p.25). The contemporary urban is a hybrid collective that can be seen to be 'populated' with a diverse range of socio-natural entities that shape the exchanges, conflicts and settlements that take place between natural resources and social, economic and symbolic forces. This can often result in highly uneven distributions and circulations of power and resources within the urban matrix.

FlyingCity-Drifting Producers: A Story of Urban Regeneration

Reflecting on the city as a hybrid space that gathers in an array of entities into its sphere of influence can result in a conception of the urban environment as the singular site of conflict between the social and the natural, however tensions are not always generated in this way and do not always produce predictable outcomes. In the city of Seoul, South Korea a recent urban regeneration project (2001) around the Cheonggyecheon district highlights some of the unexpected alignments that are forged between the diverse actors who make up the populations of hybrid collectives that construct our urban environment(s). Such alignments can be seen to give shape to the lives and practices of the urban subjects who inhabit the city.

The plan for a 'restoration' of the Cheonnggyecheon[49] district was conceived as a long overdue reclamation of part of its once symbolic river system, lost under the concrete of an elevated highway project completed in the 1960's. The Cheonnggyecheon Stream is one of four tributaries of the Han River system, which includes the Jungnangcheon, Yangjaecheon and the Hongjechcheon rivers. Cheonnggyecheon has historically been considered one of the most important of these tributaries due to its geographical location in the city's epicentre and because of its cultural significance. Seoul has one of the largest city waterways in the world and the Han and its tributaries have long been revered in the foundational narratives of the city and have deep

---

[49] The 'Cheonnggyecheon Restoration Project' was the name given to the redevelopment by the Seoul Metropolitan Government, South Korea.

connections to Koreas Imperial past. In re-affirming the central role of the Cheonnggyecheon Stream in the construction of a new identity for Seoul, planners sought capital from a program of redevelopment that merged ideas of national heritage and urban sustainability with economic progress, at both a local and global level.

An investigation of the impact of the proposed restoration on the local urban population formed the focus of a long term research exercise and a series of works that emerged from a project platform instigated by the artist collective FlyingCity - Urbanism Research Group. Initiated at the start of 2003 and continuing through to the end of 2004 FlyingCity, collaborating with the public and community groups produced a rich archive of photographs, maps, and texts alongside more direct urban actions and public performance. An analysis of this multi-layered and distributed project platform and its various manifestations of production and dissemination expose a number of tensions between competing forces and sources of agency within urban landscapes and reveal some of the complex agential sequences that unfold within an 'ecology of agencing' at work in modern city spaces.[50] The project's live phases, constituted of various processes of observational documentation, counter cartographies and direct urban intervention as well as the events that took place in the city following the final phases of the project offer productive insights into the increasingly post-natural condition of late capitalist urban environments and the paradoxical nature of developmental policies within modern democratic systems.

FlyingCity is a small collective of artists and theorists based in Seoul, South Korea.[51] Formed in 2000, they have frequently collaborated with non-art organisations and local citizens in a number of long term projects, fieldworks and urban actions, disseminating praxis and research through a variety of spatial forms and processes. The original aim of the group was to establish a research

---

[50] This project has not been widely disseminated outside of Korea or the Oceanic continent and there is limited literature that considers the socio-political implications of this work despite it being featured in two recent surveys and analyses of the emergence of collective artistic production and the relationship between contemporary art and social change, see Bradley, Will and Esche, Charles (eds.) (2007) *Art and Social Change: A Critical Reader* London: Tate Publishing and Afterall and Kunsthalle Fridericianum and Siemens Arts Program (eds.) (2005) *Collective Creativity / Kollektive Kreativität Frankfurt*: Revolver.

[51] Jeon Yong-seok formed the group with two younger artists, Jang Jong-kwan and Gi-soo Kim. The current members along with Yong-seok are Jeon, Jang, and Oak Jung-ho.

based collective that would also act as a project initiator in the specific urban context of Seoul, producing field studies, unofficial archives and propositional installations (both inside and outside of the gallery space).

Conflating artistic and activist responses to urban transformation and establishing a methodology that seeks to '…examine the city's meanings…' (Yong-Seok 2001) FlyingCity produce an archive of processes, information and documentation that 'proposes the creation of a new discourse' on the contemporary object of the city. Employing the strategies of psycho-geographic mapping and field recording multiple forms of 'data' are accumulated and articulated to reveal both the immediate and less visible interconnections and relationships between the everyday lives of urban citizens and their urban environments, especially those being produced during a period of accelerated urbanisation. Looking beyond the process of mapping space in purely physical terms, FlyingCity seek to excavate the historical and psychological 'density' of urban environments and experience where 'moods of places and patterns of action become more important than cartographical facts, helping us to appreciate the city's overwhelming scale and views' (Yong-Seok 2001). Here the relationship between the formation of the urban subject and the ecological nature of its construction are explored in psycho-geographic terms where 'mental maps emphasize the impact of space and the ways of thinking and experiencing that it inspires in us'. (Yong-Seok 2001).

Like other artists and writers in recent decades FlyingCity make use of such a methodology as a self-conscious aesthetic device as well as a means to produce unexpected 'jolts' or perceptions of the times and spaces folded into the modern urban matrix. Generating specific case studies of how such strategies are put to work in the context of aesthetic production and wider political or social struggles.

In the particular context of the Cheonggyecheon project FlyingCity utilised various registers and intensities of research and cartographic visualisations to open up urban spatialities to a more

trans-historical and trans-political gaze. Such a counter normative process of mapping or what we could call the production of new delineations in the patterns and effects of urban experience elicit a glimpse into the hidden dynamics of urban transformation seen from both below and above. Whilst concentrating on the perspective of Seoul's living inhabitants as examples of those whose environment and lives are literally undergoing transformation what FlyingCity's Cheonggyecheon project also begins to delineate is the entanglements of memory, symbolism and materiality that govern the impetus, logics and eventual physical processes of urban transformation.

What such forms of cultural praxis often reveal is the contingency of urban spatialities, what this project in particular brings into view is an exposure of the latent agency of materiality present in the composition of our urban environments. In this case exposing the role of socio-natural entities in contributing to Seoul's rapidly transforming urban landscape during a period of unprecedented change in South Korea.

FlyingCity's research orientated spatial practice enables the development of a greater understanding of urbanist histories and by excavating residual, unofficial and marginal histories they reconfigure perceptions of the temporal and spatial composition of the urban environment. Research strategies that combine activities such as inter-subjective mapping and group interviewing can be seen as 'attempts to revive the feelings and thinking of the past and to relate them to political issues of the present' (Yong-Seok 2001). As well as creating tools for examining and questioning contemporary urban issues, especially those relating to the politics of space and processes of uneven social development. The group employ research strategies and laboratories in an attempt to reveal the tensions that exist between urban planning and governance and the patterns of the everyday lives of urban citizens, they also instigate urban actions and proposals that experiment with alternative urban futures, focusing on a specific critique of the accelerating changes and developments that were taking place in the post-war environment of the city of Seoul.

The project *Drifting Producers* (2003) emerged as a response to the proposed redevelopment of the city centre around the then underground Cheonggye rivulet that runs from north to south through an area of high density population in downtown Seoul. The Cheonggyecheon Stream originates in the northern district of Taepyeong-ro running through the very centre of Seoul, crossing its political and commercial centre and its ancient heart before finally flowing into the Hangang River to the south of the city. The symbolic and strategic position of the stream has made it an important component in the structure and development of Seoul's changing urban composition, retaining a significant role in the city's history and more recently, visions of its future. Given the nuances of meaning and significance attached to this increasingly hybrid landscape radically redrawing the physical contours of this place or seeking to redefine its purpose or meaning was a step that inevitably led to a series of inter-related contestations over land, resources, local livelihoods and national identity.

In the 1960's the area around the Cheonggyecheon Stream was effectively divided into two distinct urban areas following the redirection of the rivulet system underground and the construction of an elevated highway, just one part of growing transport network then seen as a symbol of Seoul's successful program of modernisation. Upstream was Gwang-gyo, considered a model of thriving private enterprise and a blueprint for the future development of business and commerce in downtown Seoul. Downstream was Pyeonghwa Shijang an area of industrial workshops, informal housing and un-regulated trading. By the late 1990's Pyeonghwa Shijang was considered by the city authorities to be a site ripe for urgent redevelopment and transformation being portrayed by planners as a relic of outmoded forms of production and an 'urban slum'.

The specific character of this space had been established after a number of social upheavals that had forced inhabitants to relocate to larger cities such as Seoul, often when there was little of the necessary infrastructure to support them. The need for redevelopment was not a view shared by local inhabitants and likewise it did not reflect the consensus of opinion of the majority of Seoul's

citizens. The Cheonggyecheon Restoration Project was announced shortly after the inauguration of Seoul's new mayor in 2002. Lee, M.B. was a highly ambitious politician who had recognised the potential heritage and commercial value of the area and had campaigned on a public commitment to modernising the city and restoring its historical status.

The establishment of this new local authority coincided with the publication of Cheonggyecheon's History and Culture (Institute of Seoul Studies and the University of Seoul 2002), commissioned by the Seoul Metropolitan Government, this archival study surveyed the significance of the area and the river in historical terms and their relationship to cultural memory. The language of the text situated the forgotten 'relics' of Cheonggyecheon (it's river, bridges and cultural practices) within a discourse of loss and mourning and effectively laid the foundation to establishing a logic of expediency for a committed program of restoration and renewal. The plan to remove the highway and return the clean waterway to the heart of Seoul and the promise of significant social transformation, on the face of it seemed like a move that would have been widely welcomed.

However as FlyingCity stated at the time this was a restoration plan that was met with deep suspicion in a climate of intense local and national political competition and at a time where the future of Seoul as a modern democratic city was being put to the test. Not least because many were unsure as to the exact nature of the motivations behind the plan, and because there was a great deal of public uncertainty as to exactly what was being restored, at the expense of what else. As Yong-Seok put it at the time, 'people debate whether this project is merely discovering the natural water line or a sneaky redevelopment for capitalist profit, which will expel already marginalised social groups located there' (Yong-Seok 2007: p.369).

The redevelopment threatened the destruction of the homes of these communities and the informal economies that they had established in the 'street' spaces underneath the elevated highway and road system that covered the river. The proposed plan included the removal and

relocation of a large group of Korean citizens mainly those from the marginalized groups who had taken up unofficial residence in the area, a process that began in the 1950's when this area of the city was appropriated as living/working space following war and large scale migration from the rural provinces. These groups had since that time established spontaneous forms of communal habitation and industrial workshops with their own networks of production and distribution systems: producing a range of iron, steel and metal wares, tools and electronics. In effect they created a small scale parallel economy that generated a limited income and sense of relative economic independence and stability in an area of extreme poverty and governmental absence.

The *Drifting Producers* project began as an extended research exercise into the socio-economic conditions that had shaped the spontaneous and improvised adaptations to the severe urban conditions faced by the socially disenfranchised groups of the Cheonggyecheon area. FlyingCity became fascinated by the economic adaptability of these communities and in particular they were increasingly drawn to the creative systems of production and distribution that made up their interconnected micro-industries (see Fig.1). The research focused on mapping the developments and connections in this network of production systems and the horizontal structures that linked the range of workshops that constituted this micro-economy.

What this initial mapping indicated was that contrary to the claims by the city authorities that there was no order to these networks of production (or worse still that the area was rife with illegal activity), they were in fact highly organised networks resembling self-regulated production assembly lines. These networks effectively managed production through a responsive system of control that was flexible enough to keep costs low and to adapt to changes across the network (in terms of resources and labour) and fluctuations in the local 'market'.

Figure 1. FlyingCity - *Power of Cheonggyecheon* (2003) FlyingCity employed a range of visualisations to document the production and distribution network of metalwares in Cheonggyecheon. The *Power of Cheonggyecheon* illustrates the density and proximity of these inter-related micro-industries that were already well established in and around the streets of Pyeonghwa Shijang.

Organised under the principles of horizontal production where work is effectively segmented and where various lines of production cross, elaborate metal work and integrated electronic construction soon emerged. This is exemplified in the way in which this district became synonymous with the production of electric fans, an object featured in a number or artefacts and documents produced by FlyingCity.

The research project established an alternative critical framework for challenging the city government's policy for the future of the city that was based solely on the logic of late capitalism, and provided a means of questioning the plans to relocate these merchants to the outskirts of the city or to present their activities as representative of a now obsolete industrial based economy.

FlyingCity chose the term 'drifting producers'[52] as it referred to the relations between the workshops in these production networks that are organised using a system of 'front-rear' production lines according to each of the products assembled. However the use of the notion of drift goes further as it elaborates on the specifics of these systems of self-organisation and management of these small scale (and often precarious economic activities). To drift indicates that they cannot be decided in advance or fixed at any point in the process, instead what is necessitated is a series of ongoing creative adaptations to the socio-economic changes that occur at both a local and global level. These small scale workshops had developed through experimentation with and adaptation to local markets and had maintained a flexible management of their production and distribution systems where each stage could respond and adapt to changes anywhere in the network. In this way there was a chance of competitiveness and sustainability within a wider 'official' market.

---

[52] 'Drifting producers' was adopted by the group with reference to a book which describes the workings of the handcraft industry in Italy following the breakdown of mass production. The notion of 'drifting' points to the utopian urban wanderings and psycho-geographic practices advocated by the Situationist International, whilst attempting to recuperate the potential of the term to describe the everyday tactics used by urban citizens to negotiate socio-economic realities.
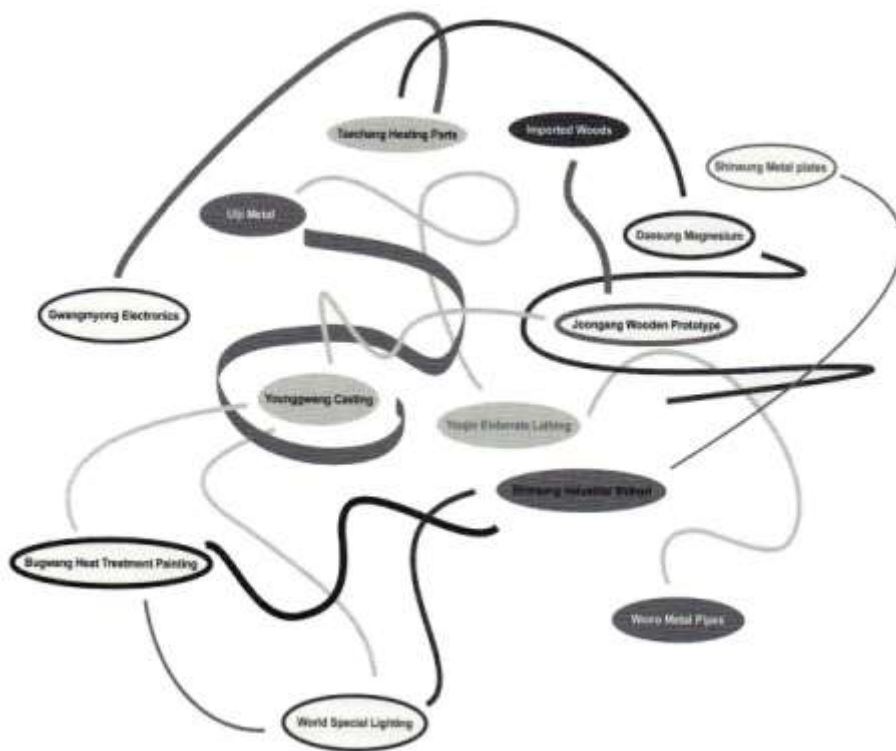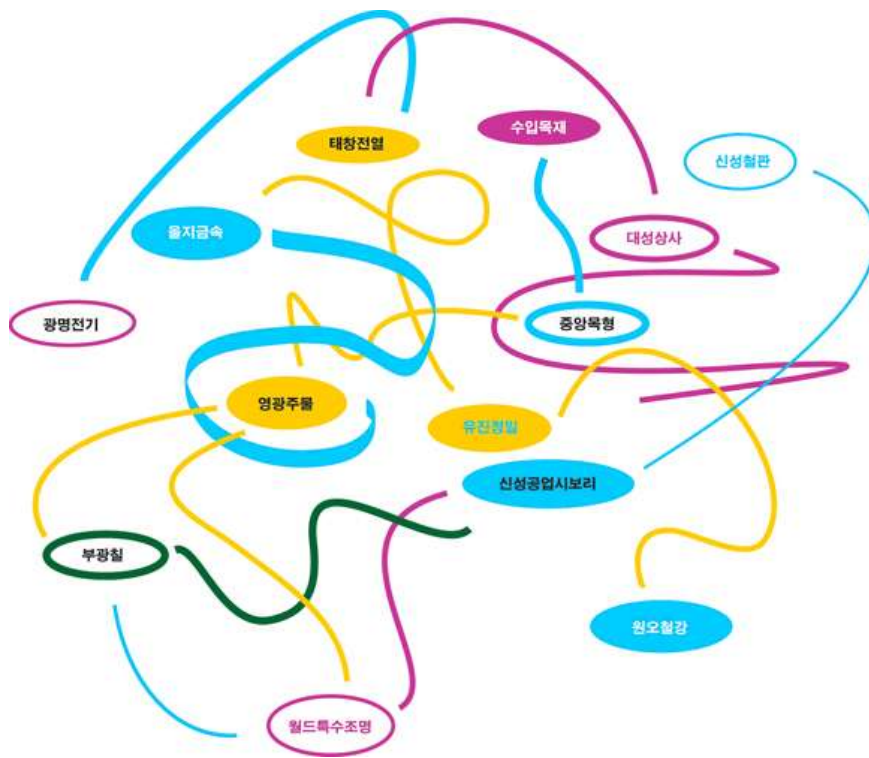
Figure 2. FlyingCity *Drifting Producers* (2003)
FlyingCity produced a number of maps including this diagram of the production networks established between different metal workshops in the Cheonggyecheon area. These maps identify the main workshops operating at the time, indicating how each workshop was connected to others and how specialist work was collectively managed.

FlyingCity mapped this network seeking to visualise the horizontal nature of the system, indicating where workloads could be divided and how more elaborate and diverse work could take place at the points of contact between workshops (see Fig.2). The research undertaken in the project was an attempt to reveal the dynamic nature of a self-organised system that had emerged from an unsanctioned appropriation of an urban space that at the time was not supported or regulated by local government. The network could not be determined in advance and hence it was subject to the fluid movements and changes in response to the workers, products and consumers operating a necessary system of drift, as FlyingCity themselves stated, 'by drifting they can adapt to a post-Fordist economy, it allows them to take unexpected turns of direction and merge in a creative way' (Yong-Seok 2007: p.370).

The *Drifting Producers* project encompassed an analysis of the networks of production associated with the Cheonggyecheon workshops, at the same time it set out to examine the dynamics of the local street vendors and markets that had emerged in parallel to these systems. Conducting extensive interviews with both groups elicited a range of, sometimes contradictory, responses to the proposed re-development of Cheonggyecheon as well as revealing some of the specific processes of economic adaptability developed by this community within the context of their changing urban reality.

The street vendors were seen by the group as part of the autonomous developments that had taken place in these spaces, occurring in the streets, occupied by local inhabitants, and often resulting in the formation of new social groups and forms of mobility. The appropriation of the space for diverse forms of self-regulated economic recycling and economic division were seen in stark contrast to the official interventions that had occurred in previous urban developments and those that were being proposed for the area. This unsanctioned use of space for street trade and diverse small scale economic activities echoes similarly rapid changes occurring in the spatial

configurations of neighbouring East-Asian cities such as Hong Kong or Bangkok and it is possible to track similar informal or 'drifting' economies elsewhere in this geographical region.

Examining the cultural, social and economic phenomenon of modern China and the changing nature of its urban dynamics Neil Leach (2004) offers an analysis of how in the context of rapid modernisation and expansion contemporary urban spatialities like those found in South East Asia are marked by a continual flux in spatial identity. Leach focuses on the interstitial spaces of Hong Kong (its side streets, underpasses, thoroughfares, vacant lots etc.). These are spaces that according to Leach 'are colonised and re-colonised' (2004: p.108) at great speed and intensity, often by minority groups who are denied access to official spaces. Parallel economies take over these marginal spaces for temporary or semi-permanent use, as sites for commerce, trading, and leisure (street vendors, informal markets, foodstalls, cafes, meeting places, bars etc.). Mirroring the post-war developments in the Cheonggyecheon district of Seoul the morphological cycles of the interstitial spaces of Hong Kong force the boundaries between public and private to become indistinct and undermine the notion that space is ever pre-determined. In contrast these on-going appropriations and re-appropriations remind us that space is constantly re-negotiable.

Foregrounding a relational making of space where 'spatial identities are defined less by architectural form, and more by the events that take place there' (Leach 2004: p.109), these acts of appropriation transform spaces through temporary uses rendering them sites of an ever-changing identity. In his own act of appropriation Leach utilises the concept of 'drag', to suggest that these zones of temporary appropriation or what he terms 'drag spaces', are 'transit spaces with transitory identity' (2004: p.108). The appropriation of these spaces by diverse users for diverse activities creates a visual collage of previous and present usage. This ceaseless appropriation or re-invention of space operates in a similar way to the appropriation of identity and reinvention of the self. As drag identity is a performance of the self, drag space is a kind of

performance, space is made by the events and relations that move through it. In this analysis Hong Kong 'is the site of a complex choreography of spatial appropriations. The architecture of cross-dressing' (2004: p.109).

The idea of drag space articulates a very specific conception of space, where space is consistently re-invented through diverse uses and events using a temporal frame not normally experienced in urban spaces. It is the speed of these appropriations that makes visible the former configurations of uses and events and produces a measure of instability in the formation of any singular identity for these spaces. This visibility of former use and instability of identity is characteristic of socio-spatial configurations, space retains a residual condition that reflects former contestations and settlements that have taken place and can at times permeate or inhabit its future use or identity. In Seoul the residual condition written into the city's surfaces and the instability of a singular or fixed identity to the city created a paradoxical situation in the heart of Cheonggyecheon. Informing the somewhat fragmented and ad-hoc nature of its temporal and spatial character, whilst at the same time generating an impetus for a more schematized approach to socio-spatial formation.

In the Cheonggyecheon market area of Seoul official attempts at re-imagining the spatial character of the city such as the construction of the highway overpass had not succeeded in organizing the space into a legible structure or a into a space with any clear identity, thus it remained a space that had not been rendered manageable or productive for a capitalist market economy. The initial appropriations of the street spaces between houses and workshops and those spaces opened up under the elevated highway resulted in the successful implantation of thriving small scale market places reflecting the slow process of transformation from temporary urban appropriations to semi-permanent stabilizations of space through self-determined urban adaptation, reversing the dominant hierarchies of urban planning.

FlyingCity made its own adaptation in response to the changing nature of this space by switching its operational register from research project to interventionist project platform through which the groups involved in these spatial appropriations could develop means to respond to the official plans that sought to redraw the boundaries of control over this area of the city. FlyingCity collaborated with local NGO's, The Consortium for Urban Environment and the Urban Architecture Network in organizing forums for public discussion and collective actions in response to the plans to relocate the community and market to peripheral areas of the city, chiefly around the Dongdaemoon Stadium.

These collaborations helped to set up a number of *Talkshow Tents* (2003) which were conceived of as a means of documenting and giving a voice to the stories, experiences and desires of street vendors, workshop workers and local residents, presenting interviews and discussions on the street in the format of a TV talk show event. Eleven such tents mimicking the informal architecture of the street vendors and market stalls were erected and stood across the Cheonggyecheon market area marking out what might be seen as a series of physical manifestations of claims for a legitimate occupation of the space or more directly as sites of resistance to the imposed hierarchical controls of official urban planning (see Fig.3).

For FlyingCity the vibrancy of a structured marketplace emerging from the irregularities and informalities of street trading in the area was a form of self-organised trading that held legitimacy through its resilience and stability in the absence of vertical spatial planning, as they argued, 'now that this market has grown up, it is nonsensical to claim that the street vendors are occupying the street illegally and have to move away' (Yong-Seok 2007: p.375).

The *Talkshow Tent* events sought to initiate an unofficial forum for participation in a public debate about the proposed changes to the Cheonggyecheon area, a strategy that highlighted the absence

of any formal systems of democratic public consultation instituted by the city government in relation to the redevelopment.

Figure 3. FlyingCity - *Talkshow Tents* (2003). Eleven such tents were erected around the site of the market acting as forums for discussion and repositories for the voices of local street traders and residents. The tents remained on the site until they were forcibly removed with the rest of the market.

The interviews and recordings made at the *Talkshow Tents* created a live (and now archived) series of responses that juxtaposed the voices (and desires) of those involved in the gradual appropriation and stabilization of the illegal 'market' space with their imposed silence in the official channels used to communicate and disseminate the ideas that would govern the 'restoring of Cheonggyecheon'. This silence was evident most clearly in the lack of inclusive planning in the city government's project but it is also reflected in the erasure of this community's history and legacy in the completed restoration of the area, that remained focused on a reclamation of a pre-industrial cultural heritage based on the city's ancient Imperial past. It could easily be argued that

both the workshop workers and the street vendors were co-authors in shaping the post-war physical and cultural identity of the Cheonggyecheon district, contributing to a distinct and significant phase in its history and development. In this sense they were joint stakeholders in Cheonggyecheon heritage.

The *Talkshow Tent* interventions remained on the site until late 2003 when the city authorities began the controversial process of evicting the protestors and citizens of Cheonggyecheon. These evictions were carried out with an assurance by the city government that the workshops, street vendors and market traders would be moved to new permanent sites around the outskirts of the city. The sequence of on-going developments in the project by FlyingCity culminated in the architectural proposal and installation *All-things Park* (2003), which was conceived in response to dialogues with street workers and traders. The work when installed is composed of architectural models, maps, drawings, film footage and digital presentations (see Fig.4). Located somewhere between a utopian plan to accommodate the alternative production networks within a central economic hub and a monument to a post-Fordist self-organised parallel economy, *All-things Park* is a proposition to transform the Dongdaemun stadium, the site then proposed for the rehoming of the Cheonggyecheon market.

All-things Park stands as an attempt to destabilise or transgress the ideological language of urban planning employed by the municipal government and is set in stark contrast to the visualisations of stratified commercial 'public' spaces and 'clean' riverside promenades flowing from the computer generated simulations of the new city of the nation championed by the local administration at the time.

Figure 4. FlyingCity - *All Things Park* (2003) Installation views. *All Things Park* has been restaged a number of times since 2003 including *Collective Creativity / Kollektive Kreativität* (2005) Kunsthalle Fridericianum , *Frankfurt* and the 9th International Istanbul Biennal (2005). The work can now be found on permanent display at the Van Abbe Museum, Eindhoven, the Netherlands.

Following further protests and negotiations with the city government traders were informed that the market was to be permanently re-established at the Dongdaemum stadium as originally planned, however this re-location was short lived and traders were forcibly evicted shortly after their relocation.[53] The proposed site for the relocation of the workshops was the district of Munjeonong, however this move was opposed by local residents of Munjeonong who had come to view these industries as obsolete, and as a result the workshops were effectively distributed and dismantled.

The tensions and conflicts that resulted from this redevelopment represent a complex interplay between entangled economic, social, cultural and natural processes. This area had seen a series of proposed urban developments during the 1950's, 60's and 70's, when subsequent city governments had implemented ambitious plans to develop the infrastructure in the areas around the Cheonggyecheon Stream. One of the largest developments undertaken by the local authorities was the diverting of the Cheonggye rivulet underground, a decision that had been based on the grounds that the waterway had already become an open sewer, fed from both the waste products of the informal housing spread along the length of the river and the makeshift and unregulated industries established in the Pyeonghwa Shijang area. This 'removal' of the river was rapidly followed by the construction of the elevated highway that ran above a more conventional roadway, as part of a wider plan to modernise the city's communication network. In the then 'new' vision of modernity both nature and history were no longer considered active components in the formation of a modern Seoul that sought legitimacy as a 'western' style city on the global stage.

---

[53] The then Mayor of Seoul Lee Myung Bak and chief exponent of the Restoration of Cheonggyecheon was considered by many who opposed the project as being behind the violent eviction of the traders at Dongdaemum and the project came under close public scrutiny that linked the rapid nature of its progress and completion to accusations of corruption and illegal methods used for the evictions. The controversy surrounding the rapid pursuit of this project and concerns over public consultation resurrects the memories of the violent dismantling of settlements in the Sanggyedong district of Seoul in 1986, these were impoverished communities who were removed to make way for a 'city beautification project' that prepared the city for the Asian Olympics. A few months prior to the completion of the 'Restorating of Cheonggyecheon' project, the vice mayor was arrested on bribery charges in connection with the project.

By the start of the new millennium such alignments between social and natural components were beginning to be redrawn and remade, as the role of both nature and history (of a uniquely South Korean culture in particular) became more keenly felt in the context of accelerating urban transformation taking place on a global scale. In 2001 at a time of late capitalist economic expansion the new city government of Seoul made the decision to modernise the area and re-establish the river in the heart of the city as a centre piece of urban renewal.[54] The re-directing of the rivulet above ground and the re-assertion of its physical and symbolic presence in the city was seen by the city government as a playing pivotal role in an urban redevelopment scheme that sought to establish new spatial alignments that would, stimulate new sources of economic investment, drive developments in commerce, and strengthen national and civic pride in the city. In advocating a spectacle of capitalist spatial politics in the Cheonggyecheon area the city government sought to cultivate both economic and cultural capital through new alignments between land use, social organisation and the re-establishment of nature in the city.

In stark contrast to the self-organised workshops and 'slum' habitations currently occupying the water's edge whose activities and presence were seen as contributory to the transformation of the waterway into a stream of pollutants and human sewage the restoration project built a consensus of support around the distinctly post-natural alignment of nature and commerce. The paradigm of urban development and sustainability has brought with it new economic opportunities and sources of capital, a trend that has increasingly emerged in both the developed and developing world in the form of nature 'preservation' or 'conservation' and the impetus to generate the large scale greening of our urban centres.

---

[54] In the 1990's like other countries in South-east Asia South Korea was experiencing unprecedented economic and financial growth, As a result Seoul has fast become one of the world's largest metropolitan economies. By 1995 South Korea's share of world export markets had risen to a staggering 3.1% from almost zero in the 1960's. Despite the financial crisis of the so called 'Tiger Economies' in 1997 which saw a dip in global share to 2.6 %, South Korea has continued to consolidate its GDP growth and its position within the global triad, see Dicken, Peter (2002) 'Trading Worlds' in *Geographies of Global Change: Remapping the World*, Johnston, R.J., Taylor, Peter J., and Watts, Michael J. (eds.) Oxford: Blackwell Publishing pp. 43-56

In the context of the Cheonggyecheon Restoration project this amounted to the redevelopment and exploitation of over 250,000 square metres of land as new green space. In the proposed construction of an orderly and managed space where a financial district would be bisected by a landmark public meeting place with clean flowing water and a 'green' pedestrian corridor the redevelopment scheme's claim was to advocate a 'restoration' of the Cheonggyecheon Stream and surrounding area. The claim by the authorities that the plan sought the 'restoration' of Cheonggyecheon was opposed by many at the time and it is important to see how such a claim was intimately tied to contestations over competing visions for the future of the city as well as the history of its development and governance. The act of restoring the stream is integral to reclaiming a heritage and indicates how such projects engender a level of political instrumentation. In particular the desire to establish a programme of restoration for the city should be evaluated in the context of the significant changes that have occurred in post-war Korean economic policy making and the struggles that have taken place to form a new landscape of cultural politics in a country emerging from a complex colonial and ideological legacy.[55]

The search for national consensus over current and future economic policy making and the means by which a distinct cultural identity could be reclaimed intersect around the issues of land reform and control over Seoul's rivers, factors that clearly motivated the Cheonggyecheon restoration project. For more than five decades civil engineering schemes had ensured the physical expansion of the city and the effective management of the twenty three tributaries around which it is formed, to guarantee a stable water supply and effective sanitation system. However the Cheonggye rivulet's flow is intermittent due to seasonal changes in rainfall resulting in flooding and water shortages and prior to its interment the river level was often insufficient to carry away waste products. In order to maintain adequate water levels for the 'restoring' of the

---

[55] Following the Korean War of 1950-53 South Korea went through three decades of political and social instability. A military coup in 1961 and the U.S backed regime that emerged marked an era of large scale industrialization and social unrest. The 1980's saw the brutal suppression of popular uprisings in the provincial capital of Kwangju, a national Labour Struggle and resistance to U.S influence and interference. Free elections in1992 ushered in a period of swift internationalization, economic growth, expansion of urban centres and U.S style neo-liberal democracy. This has been followed by increased westernization including the establishment of the Kwangju International Biennale in 1995, a year that marked the 15th anniversary of the Kwangju Massacre.

Cheonggyecheon Stream it was necessary to supplement the water supply using a mixture of water from the largest river in Seoul, the Hangang and treated wastewater, an enterprise that came at great cost to the city authorities. The water that now flows in the stream is diverted from the Han River and combined with waste water processed through a new treatment facility plant, in effect the new stream is an artificial river, a hybrid of nature and technological infrastructure. The expansive technology networks (chiefly water and electricity supplies and conduits) required for the re-establishment of the Cheonggyecheon stream undermine any claim the project has for creating a sustainable city environment that successfully marries urban development and nature. Instead this mobilization of nature can be construed as a more cynical attempt to acquire 'green' capital and greater control over, and commodification of, the region's water commons and public spaces. In parallel to this the specific alignments that now exist between the river, land and social structures reflect a desire to impose a more hierarchical and symbolic control over this area of the city, a space whose form and characteristics had up until then been shaped by patterns of urban informality and unregulated appropriations.

The restoration project represents a reclamation of more than a cultural heritage and a 'natural endowment' to the city, what the scheme has also sought to restore is a legible structure to the city that renders it manageable and productive. The river and newly constructed pedestrian corridors that surround it are highly 'striated'[56] organised around a more systematic structure that controls how the 'public' spaces and conservation areas are accessed, navigated and experienced both physically and in terms of their renewed symbolic meanings. Striated spaces might be seen to restrict or restrain the diversity and emergent qualities of urban practices and processes, however it should be recognised that urban spatialities come about as a result of the reciprocity

---

[56] Striated is borrowed here from Deleuze and Guattari's attempt to think the city through the notion of the rhizome. It refers to the fixity of a vertically orientated hierarchical construction of space which is in stark contrast with the horizontal slippages of identity found in smooth space. Striated space as opposed to smooth space restricts relations and movements between bodies by governing space according to rigid forms of organisation and structuring. In this way space becomes delineated in ways that shape or control social interaction. See 'The Smooth and the Striated' in Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Felix [1987] (1996) A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia (trans. Brian Massumi) London: Athlone Press, pp.474-500

that exists between the smooth and the striated. It is therefore important to recognise that the formation and stabilisation of urban spatialities are often dis-proportionately subject to dominant social and economic forces and the scopic regime that orders and modulates our experience of the modern city.

It is in this way that the spatial identity of Cheonggyecheon has been stabilised, authority and control is embodied in the demarcations between the different zones that now determine the way in which the area is navigated and the ways in which the space might be practised. Far from the transitory identity of 'old' Cheonggyecheon the restoration project has produced a schematized socio-spatial formation that has edged out the chaotic appropriations of space evident in the informal economies of the workshops and street trading and replaced them with more organised and productive modes of practice.

This is exemplified in the zonal system through which new Cheonggyecheon is traversed and experienced, creating spaces of consumption, 'public' meeting places, stages for cultural events and edification and perhaps most significantly highly ordered spaces for encountering urban natures. Beginning in the Dongdaemum district the river and pedestrian areas divided into three distinct zones that mark out the terrain's identity, an identity that is tied intimately to its renewed economic, cultural and environmental capital and to its distinctly post-natural condition. Zone 1 – History: restages an imperial past by reclaiming and re-siting some of the 'foundational stones' of the city and through the restoration of iconic bridges, images and public monuments that celebrate the city's imperial origins.[57] Zone 2 – Urban and Culture: mobilizes the green corridor and the flow of the water to create a highly legible structure to the space in terms of how it might

---

[57] The Gwangtong Bridge is now located on the river 150 metres from its original location, it is the cities largest remaining ancient stone bridge and was built during the early Joseon Dynasty. Another prominent feature of the development is the Banchado, a 200 metre depiction of a visit by King Jeongjo to Suwon castle, King Jeongjo (1752–1800) was the 22nd ruler of the Joseon Dynasty who instigated large scale civil engineering projects that deepened and widened the river, to control flooding and manage the water supply of the Cheonggyecheon and its tributaries. His successor King Sejong was instrumental in the decision to use the Cheonggyecheon as a sewer. For the 500 years of the Joseon Dynasty the Cheonggyecheon washed away the waste products of the city's population and industries, whilst the remaining tributaries supplied it with a clean and stable water supply.

be traversed; producing fluid patterns of movement between forms of organised leisure, cultural edification and consumption to generate clearly delineated intersections of public and private spaces. Zone 3 – Nature: is where the stream begins to widen as it moves towards the edges of the city, so constructing a space for engaging with the river, nature and examples of local biodiversity (see image sequence in Fig.5).

When it ultimately meets with the Jungraechon stream and Hangang River it combines to contribute to the formation of a large wetlands area outside of the city which is now designated as a conservation zone. This conservation zone exemplifies the propensity of contemporary urban developments to present 'nature' through a series of segmented views which 'arrange' the objects of nature and in turn organise our possible range of experiences of/with it. What this kind of treatment or organisational schematics succeeds in doing is separating the viewer and the environment through a sequence of measured scopic, perceptual and haptic proximities that all contribute to a process of distantiation between the subject and environment. In eco-logical terms the demarcations between the human body and nature, and the city and nature, are effectively reasserted and re-set along an axis of rigid striations that work to 'instill in each person that 'nature' is an *other* (an outside), and that they *themselves* are an 'other' to nature' (Halsey 2007: p.144).

In the creation of this 'natural' spectacle a restoration project such as the one in Cheonggyecheon divides and organises space and its objects by drawing on the habitual practices of the mobile body of the contemporary urban citizen, one that increasingly becoming homogenised around patterns of consumption. In the first two zones in particular controlled directional movement is facilitated by the broad pedestrian corridors that run parallel to the stream and the smaller walkways and network of levels that stratify the approaches to the site and connect it to the adjacent streets and spaces that make up the higher levels of urban density in the surrounding district.

Figure 5. *Cheonggyecheon Restoration Project* (2001). River views of Zone 2 Urban and Culture and Zone 3 Nature show the pedestrian corridors, platforms and walkways that stratify the entrances to the space, creating particular pedestrian movements that frame nature for visual consumption.

This managed system of movement at street level is countered with clearly demarked physical punctuations, where moments of stasis are invited in the viewing and congregational areas that are designated at various points along the river's length. These recreational 'platforms' not only arrest the movement of the bodies that travel through this space but more importantly they work to organise and ritualise our perception and relationship to 'nature'. This is a process that is accentuated in the third zone where the pedestrian corridors and platforms frame the vistas onto the bodies of water that shape the surrounding landscape.

On another level the conception and construction of the second two zones of the project indicates the extent to which the project initiators sought to gain cultural capital from the 'appearance' of sustainability and the progressive ideals of 'greening' urban space. An endeavour that has resulted in the construction a typically post-natural urban environment, one whose specific conditions produces a model for the kind or urban subject that will inhabit or 'consume' it. The establishment of a conservation zone completes the series of transformations of the 'new' river into a symbol of cultural and economic renewal and the unlikely site of eco-tourism, for Mark Halsey (2007) this model of eco-tourism is one that is increasingly prevalent in current forms of nature management and preservation.   This regulated and prescriptive presentation of 'nature' reinforces the perceptions of 'nature' as the *other* to social life (and in this case urban life) and the 'subject' as *other* to nature, according to Halsey 'eco-tourism carves up the world and its 'objects' and ascribes a definitive (commercial) value to them' (2007: p.145). Eco-tourist experiences can produce limiting affects on the capacity of a body to 'merge or become part of a milieu' (2007: p.146), slicing up space into homogenized zones that dislocate nature from everyday practice. As Halsey concludes in his spatial analysis of nature parks, 'wherever there is the thought or requirement to 'go to' nature there is the implicit or explicit configuration of eco-systems as an 'afterthought' (as a periphery, an outside, an excess) to the way people 'normally' articulate themselves' (2007: p.149). In this multi-faceted and highly politicized process of 'restoration' the land and river was

'reclaimed' for public and private use, its new identity wrestled from the unsanctioned uses for which it had been appropriated by the marginalized groups that made up the local community of Cheonggyecheon and reformulated to fit a new political and cultural agenda. The result of which has been the production of a distinctly post-natural urban environment and urban subject.

Cultural Acts in an 'Ecology of Agencing'

The *Drifting Producers* (2003) project reveals a number of ways in which self-determined communities are able to develop systems and inter-dependent mechanisms around informal micro-economies. Responding to the gap left over from failed infrastructural intervention and the absence of top down governance and effectively negotiating the complexities and challenges of modern urban realities. Taking on a more critical stance of such a cultural enterprise necessitates that we consider the project in terms of its efficacy to develop new tools for cultural activism or the role that such forms of spatial practice might play in intervening in and reformulating existent social relations and conditions. What is clear in this respect is that such a degree of agency is not easily produced, as such forms of praxis articulate these desires within a complex and unstable ecology of 'agencing' that distributes and distorts intentionality through an array of unexpected actors. In fact the failure of the collective body of individuals that made up the informal economies of Cheonggyecheon to reproduce stable agential alignments with 'other' actors, principally the material components of their immediate environment is echoed in the way in which FlyingCity perhaps overlooked the way in which nature mediates human action and at times exerts its own agential influence in post-natural urban spatialities.

We might look to the multi-layered film essay *Cheonggyecheon Medley: A Dream of Iron* (2010) as a kind of postscript to the *Drifting Producers* project by FlyingCity.[58] In this film Kelvin Kyung Kun Park, who had earlier collaborated with FlyingCity, constructs an audio-visual document of the impact of modernity on the collective consciousness. Through the recurring nightmare of the

---

[58] Cheonggyecheon Medley was first shown as a five screen video installation at the Ilmin Museum of Art, Seoul. It has since been publically screened at a number of international film festivals including Berlin (2011), Los Angeles (2011) and Bangkok (2013)

narrator and a letter written to his dead grandfather, who worked the metal in Cheonggyecheon's workshops, the film tracks the extent to which the lives and practices of the local communities became intimately interwoven with, even shaped by, the iron (see Fig. 6).

Figure 6. Kelvin Kyung Kun Park - *Cheonggyecheon Medley: a Dream of Iron* (2010) film still and installation view. Kyung Kun Park's film essay is a collage of archive footage and visual material shot in and around the former sites of the metal workshops of Cheonggyecheon.

Cheonggyecheon Medley to a much greater extent than *Drifting Producers* recognises the degree to which iron shaped the material environment and collective conscious of Seoul and its citizens. Limiting the capacity of workers and citizens to produce new alignments with other 'actors' as the industrial economy was rapidly super-ceded by an information economy. And contributing to the conditions whereby natural entities, in this case the water began to exert its own agential role against their interests. However what the various stages of FlyingCity's project platform *Drifting Producers, Talkshow Tents* and *All Things Park* (2003) do produce are compelling lessons on the complex nature of the 'ecology of agencing' that shapes urban subjects and environment(s).

In particular what this project points to is the extent to which the specific alignments and settlements that can shape socio-spatial organisation at a local level are linked to contestations between entities at other levels. The attempt by the city authorities to re-develop this area can be seen as symptomatic of the wider conflicts in the region between pre-modern and modern ideals, reflecting moves by government to instigate programmes of progressive (and legitimate) forms of economic activity principally through control and access to land, labour and natural resources in urban spaces. The apparent success of the project in symbolic terms and in terms of its impact on the social fabric of the city, reflected in official rhetoric, public approval ratings and the international acclaim since its completion should be considered through close critical questioning of what such a project has restored and what qualities of change it has enabled.[59]

The struggle over the Cheonggyecheon area, between competing uses of space such as those developed spontaneously by the local community and those proposed by the city government was played out against a backdrop of a logic of urgency for economic growth, urban gentrification, and the restoration of nature through the reclamation of the river. This conflict represents an example of the ways in which social and economic realities are inextricably tied to the hybrid condition of

---

[59] The project was given international attention at 'Metamorph' the ninth Venice International Architecture Biennale (2004). It was featured in a special exhibition entitled 'City and Water' which showcased a number of 'environmentally friendly' urban planning projects from international waterfront cities. The prestige gained through the inclusion of this project as the centrepiece of this exhibition should me measured against the backdrop of growing criticism of the project at home in Seoul, where concern were being raised as to the speed, social impact and environmental sustainability of this large scale urban redevelopment.

urban spaces. Plans to reinvent such spaces bring into focus the ways in which power and agency are negotiated and distributed through an array of entities, actors and organisations in the hybrid collectives of city spaces. The Cheonggyecheon redevelopment highlights the tensions present in the processes of transformation from industrial to information economies, the struggles to maintain local identities and initiatives, and the role of natural entities in reshaping our urban environments and social organisation. What it also reminds us is that the way in which those natural entities (and the potential roles they play) are understood is wholly determined by the systems of material and discursive control being exercised and the dominant settlements in place between socio-economic forces and nature. The role of water is seen as a key component here as it continues to be elsewhere in expanding cities worldwide, as it has consistently given physical shape to, and in turn has been shaped by, urban development, water has become a physically and bio-chemically modified and reshaped socio-natural commodity. Water remains a primary source of conflict in many cities, contested for both its status as a material and symbolic commodity.

In Seoul the extent of the role that its natural waterway has played in marking out the socio-spatial character of Cheonggyecheon or the agential potential of its water to act as a mediator of forces to control the quality of life for urban inhabitants (from maintaining life though hydration and waste removal to improving the economic and ecological 'health' of an urban environment and it subjects) has everything to do with how the river has been perceived. This is as true for the river as it is nature in general, as Halsey has suggested 'the way 'nature' is *perceived* has everything to do with the way 'nature' is regulated (or constructed as an *object* of discourse)' changing this perception perhaps changes the way in which we think about our urban environment(s) and the urban subjects that populate them (2007: p.149).

By interrogating the form and scope of FlyingCity's *Drifting Producers* (2003) project and the deeply politicised urban development in which its dynamics were nested I have set out to test the extent to which spatial practices of this sort are able to reveal or even extend the existing and

evolving patterns of agencing that produce contemporary urban subjects and environment(s). Drawing on the specificities of such forms of praxis and a range of concomitant theories I have attempted to explicate the ways in which praxis and theory are becoming increasingly imbricated in a relationship of co-constitution. In making this claim it is therefore essential that this current writing does not simply state a case for a transformation of current methodologies in visual culture, rather it should be seen to actuate this claim in what has been outlined above and in what is set out below.

In this chapter I have sought to illustrate the way in which an 'ecology of agencing' can establish an(other) methodology through which we might locate or track the agential patterns left over from sources of cultural production. It is the way in which an 'ecology of agencing' can capture the outcomes that occur as a result of the series of translations of agency between us and 'things' that I have attempted to impress upon the reader thus far. In this endeavour my aim was to enable a form of agential geography to emerge that assists our understanding of the role of cultural creativity and agency, seen as an aggregate or confederacy of both practice and theory.

Acts of Commoning

'All of culture and all of nature get churned up again every day'

(Bruno Latour 1993: p.2)

'If cities are inhabited with and against the grain of urban design, such inhabitation involves more than living with the city. It involves ecologies becoming urban and cities becoming ecological'

(Steve Hinchliffe and Sarah Whatmore 2009: p.108)

In his opening to *We Have Never Been Modern* (1993) Bruno Latour describes the way in which a plethora of imbroglios of nature and culture fill the pages of our daily newspapers. The 'mixed-up affairs' of our contemporary milieu are there for all to see in an array of contemporaneous chemical, biological, social and political problems forming around ozone layers, epidemics, human reproduction and de-forestation. Media articles like this, he claims, expose a 'proliferation of hybrids' that our current intellectual culture struggles to define and produce robust or convincing accounts of (Latour 1993: p.1). Latour's analysis is a reflection on one of the key epistemological challenges facing us today. That is how might we begin to formulate a politics of representation that abandons the secure grounding of what he terms, 'matters of fact', understood as smooth and self-contained accounts of given entities, in favour of 'matters of concern', a more polyphonic and connective account of matters that better reflects the complexity of lived realities? (Latour 2004b p.231).

His answer is to generate a spatial form of knowledge production built on the imbrication of human and material agency and the reconnection of lost totalities. Moving from essences to networks, 'matters of fact' give way to 'matters of concern'. As a form of renewed empiricism 'matters of concern' are those accounts formed *with* things as they interact with one another, they are matters that are 'entangled in all manner of ways and with all manner of things' (Hinchliffe and Whatmore 2009: p.110). In the context of spatial culture this means thinking about architecture more transversally, for as 'matters of concern, they enter into socially embedded networks, in which the consequences of architecture are of much more significance than the objects of architecture' (Awan,

Schneider and Till 2011: p.33). In a similar way examining critical spatial practices as 'matters of concern' means finding ways to trace the patterns of agency they reveal or transform between urban subjects and environment(s), within a wider ecology of agencing.

'Matters of concern' as a conceptual tool are a means by which we might elicit new ways of encountering and grasping the co-determination of things that characterises our life-world. As such they can be seen to mandate for a revised political ecology, ushering other ways of understanding human culpability and obligation.

Latour's observations on how we might formulate an enlivened political ecology remind us of how our material engagements with the world, our actions with(in) it, perpetually generate further imbroglios of nature and culture. Just as the two spheres 'nature' and 'culture', are mixed up or churned up in the discourses of the mass media, so too are they in the routine actions of our everyday practices and the transformations we initiate in our material environment.

This is a process we could argue that begins with the act of (in)habitation, the locating of subject(s) *in* and *of* environment. When 'we' seek sustenance from, or lay claim to, the physical entities/resources on which we are so fundamentally grounded and dependent we cultivate a life-world, one formed of a commonality with our material environment and the 'we' of other subjects. Such a life-world, or collective of people and things, qualifies our relationship of immanence with 'nature', but more profoundly it demonstrates the material grounding on which any notion of a commons or a commonality might be formulated. Land, air, water and a whole range of other physical entities (biological and chemical) contribute to the fundamental building blocks of our material support system, sustaining not only ourselves but the other life forms on which we also rely. Such entities, our rights to them and our capacity to successfully manage them have formed the basis of historical discourse on the commons. Likewise contestations over them have historically been linked to the pattern of state and private enclosures of commons land witnessed in Britain as early as the 12th century, a process which accelerated in 15th-17th centuries.

The Urban Commons: the 'Natural' and the 'Virtual'

The commons is thus usually taken to refer to a 'natural' shared resource that embodies both a concept of entitlement and of responsibility. But when we invoke a commonwealth we are speaking of something with both a material *and* virtual substance. Materiality becomes a mediator through which abstract notions of the 'public realm' and the 'public good', 'civic responsibility' and 'civic obligation' are constructed. When we build a commons we construct something with a physical and virtual character, formed of contingent and precarious alliances across the natural and social spheres. The commons is a vast and fluid natural and cultural constituency. If the commons can refer to the realm of material existence *and* a world of human ideas, then it is the way in which these are imbricated that interests me most.

In this section I want to turn attention towards a critical reflection on the concept of the commons, moving beyond a straightforward view of a commonwealth conceived of as a communal resource composed of physical materials from a sovereign, self-contained and pristine nature. In the light of post-naturalism it is prudent to question whether it is still possible to conceive of a 'natural commons'. By focusing on the impurities of our urban commons in particular, and the specificity of their constitution, I seek out a more ecological perspective on the commons in general.

The urban commons is thus posited throughout this chapter as a unique space where the 'natural' and 'virtual' substances of our commonwealth mix and interact. To assist with this attempt to invigorate our understanding of the commons this chapter looks to the ways in which contemporary critical spatial practice has generated modes of creative labour contiguous to other forms of cultural production as it become drawn to a similar line of enquiry about the superimpositions between the 'natural' realm and the 'public' realm.

Chief amongst these more contiguous cultural forms are those where a clear propinquity has developed between aesthetic production, cultural activism and quotidian practices. Examining the

'active smearings' that are taking place between different modes of cultural expression or those that operate across a continuum of cultural production my intention is to generate a commentary about where such aesthetic praxis resides and what it is able 'to do'. In particular the focus will be on questions of how cultural labour is being 'put to use' as a manifestation of modern urban 'commoning'[60] and the distinctive agential processes this action reveals and initiates as it works with and *on* existing natural/social alignments, unearthing these complex entanglements as they churn up and excavate our urban commons.

Continuing the materialist focus of earlier writing I want to explore those practices whose spatial aspect can be defined by the way in which they reveal material agency and influence spatial relations through the appropriation, re-distribution and re-codification of material resources in ways that challenge dominant patterns of enclosure. Fundamentally essential material resources such as land, water and food often exemplify the deep rooted imbrication of the 'natural' and 'social' orders that are accumulated in agrarian and agricultural practices and bio-technologies. This is evident in the way in which common pool resources are routinely inscribed with socio-economic values, and in turn when material entities can be seen to modify patterns of collective human action and contribute to the development and longevity of social institutions, such as the urban conurbation itself.

Focusing in particular on land and food as examples of 'socio-natural products' a number of spatial practices are considered in terms of how on-going enclosures of common pool resources produce active sites of urban conflict, and how processes of agencing in these specific contexts can reveal unexpected interactions between a diverse array of 'actors'. What this chapter attempts to bring more closely into view is the way in which spatial practice is able to test the distinctions made between the public and the private, communitarian use and ownership and rights and access, by revealing how land and food are highly contested 'socio-natural products' in modern urban contexts.

---

[60] Initially commoning is used to refer to a range of actions that can be considered as a means of exercising communal rights to space and material resources. This term will be expanded in the next chapter to describe a socio-political practice of commoning.

The propinquity with other sources and forces of social mobilisation and change that can take place at ground level reflect the proximity and overlap between spatial practice and other human practices in urban space. In their own engagement with the conditions and relations formed in urban spatialities the artist collective Fallen Fruit recognise this close imbrication with other actors and sources of agency, for them 'the discourse of social change doesn't generally originate from the visible cultural producers. It bubbles up from many directions, but "cultural producers," aka Kulturarbeiter (cultural workers) or artists have the chance to deflect or redirect some of the bubbles' (Burns, Viegener and Young 2012: interview conducted by author). This creative process of 'redirection' or 'deflection' of existent or emerging processes of change acknowledges that cultural agency is often attenuated but it also signals the potential of aesthetic praxis for catalysing novel or unexpected pathways of agential process.

In the case of Fallen Fruit's long term project *Public Fruit* (2004 onwards) employing such a strategic engagement with urban space and urban actors demonstrate how contemporary forms of spatial practice can be seen as a distinctive way of mounting an investigation into the tensions that exist over the control and access to common pool resources. Fallen Fruit is a Los Angeles based art collaborative whose principle members are David Burns, Matias Viegener and Austin Young. Their ongoing project *Public Fruit* began as an alternative mapping of the specific locality of their own neighborhood, Silver Lake in Los Angeles. *Public Fruit* works with the impurities (and hybridity) of the urban commons to expose how land and food resources become complex socio-natural products. According to Michael Pollan (2003) cultivation is too easily thought of as a human action *on* a material environment, instead he argues that our relationship to bio-forms, such as fruit, is more complex, a relationship he describes as 'a dance of human and plant desire that has left neither plants nor people…unchanged' (p.261). In making the assumption that we act *on* other species he suggests 'we're prone to overestimate our own agency in nature', we might 'divide the world into active subjects and passive objects, but in a co-evolutionary relationship every subject is

also an object, every object a subject' (Pollan 2003: p.xix-xx). By working with the planned and unplanned propagation of fruit species in urban spaces Fallen Fruit's intentions and the agential processes they initiate become translated through these 'objects'. In selecting cultivated objects as the mediator of their actions and the social relations such actions instigate the group suggest that in creating this dynamic 'we're doing our best to help unravel the traditional polarities of nature and culture' (Burns, Viegener and Young 2012: interview conducted by author). By incorporating these 'actors' into the particular dynamics of their practice they recognise the role of objects in translating and mediating human agency. The fruit itself becomes an arbiter between things, Fallen Fruit explain this role, where:

There are two poles at the core of what we do: the "cultural object" of fruit and the people who eat, don't eat, like/dislike, or can be reached via that object. We use the object of fruit to talk about the relationship between us and nature because fruit is neither entirely natural nor cultural: it's a product of human manipulation, a kind of collaboration with other species. We like to play with this interspecies fusion' (Burns, Viegener and Young 2012: interview conducted by author).

Fallen Fruit's decision to situate this socio-natural object/product at the centre of their practice highlights the way in which food production and food-space has, in recent decades, become re-presenced in the collective consciousness of contemporary urban subjects. This is reflected in how concerns over our relationship to food as a source of urban conflict and coherency have become the subject of international curatorial research.[61]

The role of water in the hybrid construction of contemporary urban spatialities examined in the previous chapter in the context of the work of FlyingCity can also be seen in other physical resources such as biological entities like food. The effective control over land use and the movements and distributions of biomass, that link the production and consumption of food has also produced socio-natural networks and products that continue to shape the development of urban conurbations and the social patterns of its inhabitants.

---

[61] see for example international exhibitions and programs that explore our relationship to food production and eating rituals such as *The Edible City* (2007) Netherlands Architecture Institute, Maastricht, *Foodprint: Food for the City* (2009-12) Stroom den Haag, The Hague, *Feast: Hospitality in Contemporary Art* (2012) The Smart Museum of Art, Chicago and *Green Acres: Artists Farming Fields, Greenhouses and Abandoned Lots* (2012-13) Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinatti.

Historically this has influenced the physical and spatial character of the city, enabling an expansion from a centre to a periphery as a process of urbanising nature, a subject that increasingly come under inter-disciplinary scrutiny in recent decades, Braudel ([1979]1981), Crosby (1986), Cronon (1992), Whatmore and Thorne (1997), Franck (ed.2005), Knectel (ed.2008) and Steel (2008).

The dynamics of food circulation has created a number of distinctly socio-natural entities that define the spatial character of modern cities, flows of food material via vast food webs through food gateways and food terminals surround and cut through the city shaping markets and economies. Such flows and circulations transport food between natural, social and symbolic registers, where food becomes a socio-natural entity of resource/commodity. The contemporary food-space is a distinctly social-natural construction within the hybrid collective of the city. The resource/commodity of food plays an active role in shaping the physical, spatial configurations of the city as well as the social and cultural practices of the city's inhabitants. This is most evident in the systems of economic exchange, ritualised behaviours, and patterns of consumption that food materials embed. In the case of Fallen Fruit this role is played out in a very specific context of what occurs when residual food production systems become re-distributed both spatially and socially.

By excavating the points of contact between social and natural entities that shape and change urban spatial configurations we might begin to map a series of encounters that engage with the centrality of flows and circulations of various 'bio-materials' and 'actors'. In this way the hybrid collective of the contemporary city is viewed as a mutable assemblage, whose shifting spatial character is defined by the socio-natural entities that abound and interact within it. In other words cities are attended to as fluid spaces that are contingent to relational processes between the spheres of the natural and the social, especially the flows and circulations of socio-natural resource-commodities and the forms of access and control over the 'commons'.

Today more than at any other time in the history of human society the processes of urbanising nature are eliciting ever more complex forms of urban conurbation, producing an array of hybrid materialities from water systems to food webs that cut through its physical foundations and across its surfaces. Given the way in which contemporary urban spatialities are underpinned by these distributions of polymorphous materiality the question of access and control of common pool resources has become central in the politics of urban space.

As a result analyses of urban spatialities could do more to reflect on the role of materiality in urban politics especially given on-going enclosures of the commons and the erosion of borders between the public and the private. This requires that we bring into view more closely the networks and flows of socio-natural products that pass through urban spatialities and the ways in which they give shape to urban development and experience. Focusing on the subject of material resources such as land and food a number of spatial practices are considered in terms of how they reveal the fault lines in the current settlements between socio-economic forces and nature when our shared commonwealth is transformed or programmatised or when it becomes the site of urban conflict.

Eating in Public: Cultural Activism, Cultivation and Collective Action

'…change happens only when we change things'
(Gaye Chan and Nandita Sharma 2003)

During the Autumn of 2003 a seemingly insignificant series of minor events took place at the urban periphery of Kailua close to the city of Honolulu, Hawaii. The immediate site of these events was typical of those found in many modern urban environments, a small plot of seemingly 'unproductive' and economically insignificant land adjacent to residential or commercial developments left to undergo a process of natural reclamation. However in many urban centres and peripheries it is precisely these kinds of spaces that frequently become the sites of subtle and perpetual modulations of use and meaning, often delineating the slippery borders of what constitutes public and private

'ownership' and operating as a testing ground for contestations over the designation, access, occupation and use of common land. The events in Kailua were initiated through a small intervention that could have easily been overlooked or dismissed as an anonymous act of 'gift giving' or a futile gesture that sought to create a greater sense of community cohesion. In November of that year two local residents planted seedlings of the papaya fruit tree in a narrow strip of land, a space just 6ft wide, that was partitioned in the centre by a large chain link fence erected to divide the public highway at the edge of the suburban sprawl from a large natural lake surrounded by private housing developments and established high market value condominiums.

Figure 7. Gaye Chan and Nandita Sharma - *Eating in Public* (2003). Chan and Sharma employed a number of methods for their public notifications of plantings, one mimicking the official signage around the lake, the other a more informal invitation to the public to nurture and harvest the crop.

Operating at the fringes of criminality the initiators of this act of illegal planting and trespass carried out a gesture that sought to; on one level provide fellow citizens with a regular source of free food and on another reconfigure the concept of 'public' in the context of an increasingly problematic notion of public space often obfuscated by state and private interests (see Fig.7). This narrow and seemingly derelict space in fact performed a very specific role in establishing a physical and symbolic rupture between public and private land, the strip acted as a buffer between the suburban residential dwellings and the land surrounding the lake designated for private development as well as between the memory of the land's former and future use for local inhabitants. The symbolic nature of the strip was played out against the backdrop of on-going regional and national struggles over the significance and governance of the lake and the surrounding land.

The appropriation of land in Kailua, Hawaii intervenes in operations of 'agencing' that are deeply enfolded within such complex compositions. The act of planting on such a sensitive site and the invitation to local citizens to share in the fruits of the endeavour was the work of *Eating in Public* (2003 onwards) a project platform initiated by Gaye Chan and Nandita Sharma. *Eating in Public* (*EIP*) consists of a number of related activities working at the interstices of art, activism and urban research; these include establishing unofficial urban food production and the setting up of free stores and networks of seed sharing stations. *EIP*'s activities are disseminated through various sites in Kailua and through the project's dedicated website.[62]

The lake known locally as Kaelepulu Pond (renamed Enchanted Lake by a major private development scheme in the 1950's to appeal to prospective investors) is part of what was once a 190 acre waterway system that had been a rich area for fish cultivation, agriculture, foraging and recreation. The main corollaries of the lake had been vital in maintaining local crops grown on the taro terraces around the water's edge and the connected wetlands had formed a unique ecosystem linked to the

---

[62] http://www.nomoola.com

nearby ocean on Oahu's coastline. In the 1950's land amounting to 700 acres around the waterways and lake had been signposted for development in a joint venture between land developers and the local Bishop's Estate. In the decade that followed exclusive lots in the Kailua hills rose from just 150 to 3000. As the development accelerated the environment in and around the lake was altered significantly. Dredging from the bed of the lake and water extraction coupled with the construction pollutants which had been allowed to flow back into the water system caused high levels of silt accumulation in the lake and waterways resulting in a reduction of biodiversity and a degradation of water quality.

In addition to this a number of further related environmental factors such as exploitation by larger scale agricultural development and non-point source pollution from expanding urban neighbourhoods contributed to additional chemical and biomass contamination. These significant factors were seen to contribute to the rapid decline of the area in ecological terms and as a result small scale informal agricultural and spontaneous recreational uses by the local population had all but disappeared, a situation that *EIP* reflect in their reactivation of everyday practices of foraging and self-sustenance. The waterway system had seen extensive physical transformation in the 1960's and alongside the pressures of urban sprawl and the on-going private housing development the area had been reduced to an 80 acre site that included just the lake and wetland.

The Kailua Lake and streams constitute a significant part of the local watershed and form the basis of the main water distribution network for Honolulu County, a number of key state engineering programs were carried out in 1966 to ease problems of population growth and drainage, such as the construction of canal and flood control systems. The effects of storm drains feeding into the lake from the city of Honolulu and the pressure on local farmers to pursue cash crops over local variants had effectively cut the lake off from the ocean. This step was seen by some as contributing adversely to the viability of the land to support life and those local communities whose daily lives were once intrinsically linked to the waterways. This complex array of factors had created an

unsustainable situation for the lake and waterways and that had been met by both ambivalence and growing concern by local inhabitants.

In parallel to the devaluation of the land in environmental terms in recent years the perception of the land as a public treasury for the local community had been effectively eroded, in contrast local government bodies considered it expedient that the lake and surrounding land underwent an long overdue program of restoration, one that was not at odds with its role as a symbolic national landscape and a location for organised leisure. In this context state property laws were enacted to render the land itself private, though the waterways themselves would remain in the hands of 'public' ownership, a tension revealed further in *EIP*'s redistribution of land into common hands.

This essential paradox of the commons remains how any claims to it threaten its status as shared public resource. Enclosures of the commons are often equated with violent appropriations of public resources by dominant social forces for private gain. However acts of enclosure can also be understood as an attempt to preserve finite resources in the 'public' interest. The question of how best to balance acceptable access to, whilst placing sensible limitations on, the use of commons resources to create a stable settlement between the natural and the social persists. In 1968 ecologist Garrett Hardin presented a contentious response to this dilemma in his essay *The Tragedy of the Commons* published in the journal Science.[63] Reflecting on the threat of over-population and the self-interest of some members of the human community he predicted a catastrophe for our commons resources, one that could only be abated by a greater degree of centralised control from government bodies.

Hardin's alarmist conclusions have come under increasing scrutiny in recent years. The political scientist and Nobel Prize winner Elinor Ostrum has been instrumental in redefining the narrative of the commons in our contemporary moment. In her frequently cited text *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (1990) she takes to task the assumption that the

---

[63] Science 13 December 1968: Vol. 162 no. 3859 pp. 1243-1248 also available at http://www.sciencemag.org/content/162/3859/1243.full

commons are best held under the stewardship of the state and its agencies. In contrast to the modern narrative of a 'tragedy of the commons' that has ushered in a widespread public policy founded on the efficiencies and securities of private and state ownership, she instead identifies 'institutions resembling neither the state nor the market' (1990: p.1) that have achieved levels of success and sustainability for governing sometimes scarce common pool resources. However her detailed analyses of differing models of commons governance recognises that the 'institutions' which exist today to govern common pool resources are often difficult to discern in terms of private and public interest. In such a situation we find that 'many successful CPR institutions are rich mixtures of "private-like" and "public-like" institutions defying classification in a sterile dichotomy' (Ostrum 1990: p.14). It seems that any form of governance of the commons is caught between the tensions generated between horizontal and hierarchical forms of control as well as the often slippery definitions of public and private control and interest. Thus 'public' claims to the commons can easily translate in practice as a form of private enclosure, especially when the notion of 'public interest' is held in the trusteeship of state agencies and centralised forms of control.

Ostrum's case studies of self-governance for common pool resources are often small scale and defined by local specificity in terms of the range of actors involved in these collective actions and the administrative structures that result. It is this specificity that presents what David Harvey (2013: p.69) terms a 'scale problem' when seeking solutions to commons governance more generally. What appears to work at one scale does not necessarily work at another, and the kinds of institutional structure required at each scale may vary considerably in terms of 'collective' action. Applying our understanding of small scale local strategies of commons governance to other scales, be they regional, national or global, underestimates the challenge of formulating non-hierarchical or horizontal systems of control of the commons. This problem is further complicated by the pressure exerted on commons governance by late capitalism at each of these different scales. This last point is particularly evident when successful examples of self-governance in urban commons at a local

level often become subject to more hierarchical forms of governance exercised through private interest, regional authorities and state policies at the other levels. Healthy and prospering local urban commons often come under the threat of pending enclosures, in the form of property speculation and gentrification, or the engineering of landmark public space that incorporates various degrees of 'natural' spectacle as we saw in the Cheonggyecheon Restoration Project (2001) in Seoul. According to Harvey then, the principle challenge for the 'production and protection' of the urban commons is how we govern the 'relations between those who produce or capture it at a variety of scales and those who appropriate it for private gain' (2013: p.88 and p.79).

In Kailua, Hawaii the state property laws enacted to render the land private could be seen as a bid to redevelop the area according to a rationale of regeneration and gentrification whilst releasing state bodies from any obligation to redress past environmental damage to the commons. Attuned to the exclusivity of the private housing projects and the enhancement of the site's status in relation to, both its significance to national identity and its future in a global tourism market, it is easy to see how such a site is connected to various scales of commons governance. In 1995 the lake and wetland was partitioned and portions of the land were sold for private development and semi-autonomous management. In doing so control, access and the vision for the future of the land and lake was delegated to Kamehameha Schools (a state sponsored estates management) and the private residents (ELRA - Enchanted Lake Residents Association) whose properties were immediately adjacent to the lake.

Alongside the public planting actions the project has involved the co-opting of both public and cultural spaces for alternative uses.[64] These long term initiatives are situated in a distinct local context and seen alongside the self-published pamphlets produced by Chan and Sharma they reflect how the project has sought to rekindle the role that claims to the commons make in creating a

---

[64] Seed sharing stations have been set up throughout the Kokua Kalihi Valley, at local farmers markets, and educational institutions. In February of 2012 a working station was set up to represent Chan's contribution to 'Hawai'i Art Now 'held at the Honolulu Museum of Art

fissure between the conceptions of public/private spaces in Hawaii whilst revealing some of the forces that global capital exert on local ecologies and economies.

Self-organised project platforms and collaborative initiatives that occur 'on the ground' like *EIP* engender a situated research by practice[65] attendant to the notion that new forms of knowledge can emerge from experimentation, negotiation and conflict between different kinds of actors, as Chan and Sharma have commented '*EIP* employs a trans-disciplinary approach to art praxis through the different disciplinary background of its core participants, each bringing to the project different skill sets' (Chan and Sharma 2011: interview conducted by author). *EIP* has generated a series of collaborative enterprises that have included illegal food planting, a free store community exchange programme and a distribution network of rare and native seeds. The act of unsolicited cultivation at the edge of Enchanted Lake acted as the impetus for the expansive activities of the project as well as providing a framework for marginal voices to be heard and for marginal actions to take place. The constituent parts and participants in these enterprises work to unpick existing regulatory systems and 'stitch together' conflicting agents and forces into an unpredictable patchwork of actions.

The project platform is used here as a vehicle for empowering a number of agents in terms of their ability to access resources and make legitimate claims for land as well as openly testing the ways in which we act with resources and the land in the process of 'agencing' itself. *EIP* helps us identify some of the translations that take place between actors and the 'tools' with which we choose to act. Their strategy rejects an artistic mechanism that simply negates existing social relations and conditions opting instead for a rebuilding or relations through self-organised urban practices, as they state, 'in our project, Eating in Public, we make a purposeful move away from symbolism and towards practice...stirring the demands for systemic change by challenging the imbricated systems of

---

[65] The use of the term 'situated research by practice' is used to distinguish such cultural operations from the recent institutional model of research by practice being formulated in art academies. It also alludes to a conception of a site-specific fieldwork that recognises the connectivity between local and global conditions in terms of power and agency. For more on this see interview with James Clifford 'An Ethnographer in the Field' in Coles (ed.) (2000: pp.52-71).

public and private property and demanding for a return of our commons' (Chan and Sharma 2011: interview conducted by author).

The Urban Commons as the Site of Material and Social Agencies

The term 'commons' or 'commonwealth', or the frequently used term 'public realm', are attempts to describe materials, territories and heritages that are shared, open and communal. However they often fail to encapsulate the complexity of resources or 'stuff' that they refer to, describing phenomena as diverse as the atmosphere, the oceans, the wilderness, human knowledge, technological development and genetic material. Furthermore the terms 'commons' and 'public' can often generalise or segregate material and immaterial dimensions closing off the vital links between *matter* and *human matters*.

In an attempt to clarify the precise composition of the commons, political analyst David Bollier takes the step of defining what we might sensibly say exists 'under the rubric of "the commons" (2003: p.178). Tracing the roots of the concept of an 'inherently public' set of resources or domain of life he usefully demonstrates how Roman law made a distinction between 'public assets' (res publicæ) and 'common assets' (res communes) (2003: p.179). The former describes those resources, objects and services owned and managed by systems of governance on behalf of the public. The latter refers to those 'indivisible or "fugitive" resources that seem to defy neat enclosure and management (2003: p.176). Public assets are generally protected by laws enshrined in the public polity whereas 'un-owned' common assets are often left exposed to shifting theological, political and economic influence and encroachments. To these two subtle facets of the commons Bollier adds a third 'the commons as social regime' (2003: p.178) that attempts to pinpoint the way in which the commons is not solely orientated around a physical, materially bound concept. The commons as a social regime hints at the material and immaterial gift economies and social practices that emerge from the sharing of resources, values and ideas.

Such a distinction is echoed in Hardt and Negri's (2009) account of the commons that acknowledges its two-fold character as the 'natural' and the 'artificial', the former describing a material background of matter on which we are grounded and dependent, and the latter defining the social/cultural commons of human matters and practices, such as creativity, knowledge, labour and time. For them the artificial commons is synonymous with urban existence, the urban is 'the factory for the production of the common', as it runs 'throughout the metropolitan territory and constitutes the metropolis' (Hardt and Negri 2009: p.250). The growing dominance of the metropolitan composition across the globe has collapsed the traditional divisions between rural and urban life to such an extent where there are 'different intensities of the common, but the lines of division have increasingly less relation to urban and rural environments' (Hardt and Negri 2009: p.253). In the context of the metropolis or 'bio-political city' (p.251) the formation or production of a commons takes place against the backdrop of a momentous shift in the operations of capitalist economies. A shift that has taken us from a system of production based on industry and material goods to the production of immaterial commodities, such as knowledge, services and leisure. As a result the metropolis is a bio-political space in that it is involved primarily in the production of social relations and forms of social life through complex encounters which can result in either healthy, productive, cooperative commons or unhealthy and potentially 'noxious' forms of commons (Hardt and Negri 2009: p.255).

Does this mean though that we should assume that an 'artificial' or metropolitan commons is no longer shaped by material agencies? Is it not still apparent that a 'noxious' commons can occur when the production of new forms of social life induce negative material transformations, as is the case with the parallel rise of human mobility and material pollutants. Inversely do we still see evidence of the formation of a healthy commons that is mediated through the agency of physical entities as occurs when 'unruly' urban natures catalyse informal 'publics' and become the sites for felicitous social encounters and relations. I would argue that it is pragmatic for analyses of the

commons in general to maintain that a specifically urban commons is not a wholly virtual domain. Holding on to the potential interactions that take place between contestations over the 'natural' and the 'artificial' may allow an insight into the ways in which materiality mediates our desire and capacity to formulate commonality. It is therefore productive to investigate how the composition of an urban commons resonates with the presence and role of material agencies. Elsewhere Hardt's tone is more reconciliatory between the two domains of the commons. He suggests that despite the seemingly opposing political logics of, a natural commons based on conservation and limits, and an artificial commons based on creation and openness, the two may after deeper analysis in fact be 'potential complementarities rather than contradictory relations' indicating an overlap 'in the forms of political action required in each' (Hardt 2009: p.1). Furthermore he asserts that different perspectives on the commons generated between these two domains are not 'an insuperable or even destructive difference' (Hardt 2009: p.5), if a more ecological view (as defined above i.e. as an articulation of the permeable and overlapping boundaries between nature *and* society) of the commons is formulated 'at the level of activism and theory' (Hardt 2009: p.6).

In his recent study of the politics of urban space David Harvey (2013) also appears to leave some wriggle room for us to consider how the commons maintains a socio-natural composition even in the context of rapid urbanisation, suggesting that 'the common is not to be construed… as a particular kind of thing, asset or social process, but as an unstable and malleable social relation between a particular self-defined social group and those aspects of its actually existing or yet-to-be-created social and/or physical environment deemed crucial to its life and livelihood' (Harvey 2013: p.73).

In a rush to equate the 'social regime of the commons' or the 'artificial commons' exclusively within the social dynamics of the metropolis, the danger is that a 'natural' commons it kept out of the city, and kept out of our narratives about city life and the city 'as site for bio-political production' (Hardt and Negri 2009: p.250). This severs the links between the two too neatly and risks overlooking how our biological and physical milieu can act upon our cultural or metropolitan practices and the

formulation of a virtual commons. The bio-political can of course be seen to refer to the processes that dictate the production and re-production of 'social life', but when viewed from an ecological perspective any such 'social life' is in fact the production and re-production of a 'life-world'. In his broad survey of contrasting bio-political territories Thomas Lemke (2011) has pointed out that in the context of Foucauldian bio-politics 'nature is not a material substratum to which practices of government are applied but the permanent correlative of those practices' (p.5). Holding on to the link between these domains enables us to reflect on how our interactions with our physical commons can produce and influence the kinds of virtual commons we as humans seek to operate. Likewise by maintaining a hybrid identity for metropolitan spaces we might begin to track how an urban commons specifically, might encapsulate this process at the smaller scales of everyday urban practices.

This requires a wider questioning of how the concept of the commons might be rethought in the light of post-natural discourse and how the systems of governance and regulation of the commons continue to figure in contemporary urban spatialities as sites of contestation and sources of impetus for political mobilisation. Whilst discourses on the commons or a shared commonwealth can be formulated with a strict recourse to the idea of a sovereign nature, the concept of post-naturalism demands a rethinking of this tendency. Focusing on an urban commons unsettles this sovereignty, and a commonality forged in the context of modern urbanity alerts us to the rather messy co-construction of urban subjects and environments, or the reciprocity between physical milieu and social institutions. An analysis of an urban commons should therefore capture more than just an inventory of material resources we have to hand and a treaty on who has rights to them. It should also consider the repertoire of human social concepts and institutions that continue to evolve in respect to them.

By overlaying the natural and the virtual commons in the context of an urban commons, provisional concepts such as 'public' realm', 'common interest' and commonality are synchronized with the

changing distributions, administrations, transformations and agency of material resources. Finding a critical space for an urban commons is thus an eco-political project just as the forms of experiment with urban practices and urban commoning, that link matter to human matters are for contemporary critical spatial practice.

With the example of *Eating in Public* (2003 onwards) their experiment in urban commoning began through an act of planting on 'public' ground, this is not of course an act without precedent, nor is it unique in or specific to this region. Similar acts appropriate common ground as a strategy for the mobilisation of alternative discourses on land use and as a means of exposing tensions in our perceptions of conflicts and alignment of urban space and the space of nature. The gesture of cultivating public land is in cases like these one that often remains anonymous and runs the risk of invisibility and even futility as an act of resistance to the dominant discourses and institutions that govern land usage. The unseen seedlings buried below ground represent only the potential of a future encounter that could be met with equal measures of surprise, indifference or annoyance, the result of natural or accidental colonisation of an uncommon flora or an over-bred cultivar. A gesture of this kind has to operate as both a transformer of material reality and as a symbolic disruption to the meanings we ascribe to that material reality in order to in the first instance create change and in the second codify the desire to change.

Though the intervention of unofficial planting in itself in this specific context performs an act of refusal (to acknowledge legally defined boundaries) it also operates as a removal of what that boundary defines. The strategic placement of a sign attached to the partitioning fence was displayed to inform passers-by of the potential of a future crop that would become available for public consumption. The sign mimicked the authoritative address of the official signage used to demark the perimeter of this sensitive piece of land, delimiting the movements and actions of passers-by (see Fig.7). The alternative mode of address subverted the normative language of restriction and policing often used in this context and worked to disrupt expectations about the

sanctioned use of such a space, one currently occupied only transiently by joggers and walkers engaged in what might be described as 'lawful trespass'. In contrast to this discourse of control the message on this unofficial sign was one that actively encouraged participation in the tending and cultivation of the crop, negating the legitimacy of claims to exclusive land rights and imagining an alternative form of occupation, one prized out of an extended notion of 'lawful trespass'. This temporary 'occupation' of the planters or a 'public' by proxy, through the presence of both the seedlings and the sign pointed to the problems of an entitlement to self-sustenance in expanding urban environments and embodied the proposition of an alternative discourse on land access and land rights.

This proposition was implicit in the act of planting though more explicitly stated in the closing of the message on the sign as the action of 'the Diggers' (see Fig.7). The Diggers movement emerged from the fertile ground of the turbulent social struggles that served to ignite radical political idealisms during and after the period of the English Civil War. In the act of ascribing this gesture to the actions of the Diggers the intervention takes on a symbolic function as well as a gesture of everyday lived practice enlisted into the creative methodologies of cultural activism. What is crucial in this act is the invocation of an earlier promise of a new politics of the commons that was sought by the Diggers of seventeenth century England.

Led by Gerard Winstanley the Diggers or 'True Levellers' believed an end to poverty and the beginnings of social justice lay in the re-imagining of the commonwealth of the land whereby a 'free allowance to dig and labour the commons' (The True Leveller 1645 cited in Beres [1906] 2009: p.83) would testify to a truly equal society. The name 'diggers' referred to the act of digging as imperative to the process of preparing waste or common land for planting and signifying the distinct nature of agency articulated in their actions: namely the end of the enclosure the commons and the proclamation of liberty in the act of self-sustenance. Winstanley and others set out a revolutionary political agenda based on the alignment of democratic principles and the land to create a 'common

treasury for all' (Winstanley 1645 cited in Elbridge Museum n.d.). In such an agenda we find the conflation of libertarian values and the land or more precisely the imbrication of human democratic principle and our material environment. Land and the unique potential that the soil offered in its access to creation was the site onto which these values are imbedded and translated: agency and change is accomplished through our actions and interactions with our environment.

Breaking the earth at St George' Hill for Winstanley was the act of declaring 'freedom for the creation' (Winstanley 1645 cited in Elmbridge Museum n.d), it was the ground through which his action drew meaning and the land that formed the nexus around which the act derived its potential for change, 'for action is the life of all, and if thou does not act, though does nothing at all' (Winstanley 1645 cited in Elbridge Museum n.d.). The act of digging and the act of planting was the moment when creation, with all of its uncertainty, came into being. What is particularly important in Winstanley's terms is the employment of a practice of democracy, not just its rhetoric, it is not enough to speak of democracy one must practice it. Paramount to this practice was actions that sought an end to existing property rights that had resulted in the violence and injustice of the enclosure of the commons.

Though the Diggers experiment was short lived it persists in the imaginary as a radical exercise in spatial agency and spatial ethics. The significance of the Diggers actions are instrumental in renewing critical dialogues about the amorphous nature of the commons in both a contemporary local and global context and in relation to current manifestations of trans-disciplinary spatial practice evident in 'other' architectures and collective forms of art praxis.

Eating in Public's (2003 onwards) mobilization of new critical perspectives on questions of the commons and their symbolic recall of the particularities of the Diggers political modus-operandi is echoed in other forms of contemporary cultural production. The San Francisco Diggers formed in the late sixties developed a range of strategies that conflated artistic, activist and community

practices. These included the creation of a wide range of activities that could be described as attempts to formulate communal gift economies such as open workshops, free shops and free services.[66] Their activities, viewed in the specific context of their time Illustrate how artistic strategies particular those engaging forms of activism merged almost seamlessly with the counter-cultural movements of sixties urban America.

The political resonance of the ideas and actions of the original Diggers however are best understood as the translation of a very specific manifestation of a theological ideology articulated by Winstanley and his followers. Such an ideology expressed the desire to 'level' society, espousing a commonality based on the equalities of men in the eyes of their creator. Despite the apparent ethical grounding of such a gesture the act of digging was also a subversive political act that antagonised existent power relations between different social groups and forces (chiefly state, army, gentry and peasantry). It is this interventionist nature of their actions, and their capacity to make claims for both the commons and a new commonality, that appears to sanction the kinds of spatial activism that are under currently under discussion. However the invocation of 'digging' in a contemporary context often takes place in the very different territory of a secular society within which our ethical coordinates have been significantly revised.

It is interesting to consider whether such a specific invocation of collective action or activism can still have currency today as an emancipatory or resistant form of urban politics. Likening art to politics or any form of ethical project has caused a level of anxiety that is reflected in critical analyses of the kinds of collective and participatory art practices we have seen emerge in the last twenty years (Kwon 2002, Bishop 2004, 2006a). This anxiety is particular acute when artistic practice is seen to come into contact with activist strategies, and when discourses on the nature of this contact valorise the quality of ethical encounters they operate over how they operate *on* existent ethical regimes. Or

---

[66] The experiments of the San Francisco Diggers, particularly their attempts to actualise working gift economies is discussed in Purves, Ted (ed.) *What We Want is Free: Generosity and Exchange in Recent Art* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press. For more on these ventures and their influence on contemporary collaborative art projects such as Temporary Services see Scholette, Gregory (2011) *Dark Matter: Art and the Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture* London: Pluto Press

put another way, when the capacity of art to disrupt the mechanisms of ethical relations through its aesthetic force (a force often intrinsically linked to its autonomy) becomes subsumed to its ethical efficacy.[67] However the nature of artistic ventures into ethical territories is extremely diverse and often results in forms of cultural production that do not fit so neatly into these two opposing conceptual models. What is at stake in such a debate is the extent to which an art-activism (taken to be collective and participatory in nature) can come to perform transformations on its participants and wider social relations, and the means by which it is seen to do it.[68] This is something that is complicated further in the context of critical spatial practice whose activist tendencies are filtered through the intertwined histories of art and architectural radicalism and the relations of multiple agents, something that marks them out from the more carefully stage-managed and culturally sanctioned examples of collaborative action associated with the relational art of the late nineties.

In this light the original Diggers offer a salient example of an activism that operates on the 'material' of ethical encounters *and* mechanisms through which such encounters are given social countenance. The ethico-political dimension of the original Diggers actions locates their attempt to formulate a new commonality by constructing an encounter between subjects, an action that can be seen to strengthen one form of social bond whilst de-stabilising another. What working out aesthetic problems in the ethical sphere of urban spatialities has the potential to do is enlist different actors into temporal re-fashionings of commonality. Such commonality or ethical encounters work on an existent ethical regime by re-codifying notions of alterity, recognising that ethical relations are worked out *between*, not imposed *upon* subjects and things.

---

[67] In 'The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents' (Artforum, February 2006) Bishop has argued that there is a danger when art-activism merely performs a social ameliorative function equating the ethical encounter rather disparagingly with something 'Christian' (p.183).
[68] Resisting the easy recuperation and instrumentalisation of art-activism is of course a concern for both practitioners and theorists and is something that certainly demands critical attention. Bang Larsen following a different position has argued that to 'replace art activism's positive intensities' (the good act) with a 'register of ambiguous and negative ones', like those favoured by Bishop (provocation, shock, absurdity) assumes that there are 'uncontaminated tropes' that have not been reduced to forms of 'cognitive capital'(p.31). See Bang Larsen (2010) 'The Jury Stays Out: Art, Activism and Art's New Normativity' in *Concept Store*, No.3 (Art, Activism and Recuperation), Spring 2010 (pp.26.33).

The resonance of the Diggers ethico-political project is found in other examples of cultural production in recent years such as Matthew Fuller's *Digger Barley* (2007-8), an ongoing project that seeks to distribute seeds gathered from the original site of the Diggers occupation of St George's Hill, Surrey in 1649. The procurement of these seeds from the original site of Diggers short lived experimental colony represents a distinctive means by which meaning and intentionality is translated or mediated through objects and non-human entities.[69]

Fuller's gesture extrapolates the symbolic and genetic 'materials' from the seeds to harness their potential as a social agent. The free distribution of these seeds acts as an insertion of art systems into the logic of politics and economics that underpin conceptions of a contemporary commons and our ability to change that conception. *Digger Barley* (2007-8) might be seen as a proposition for a subversive reclamation of commons land undermining agricultural imperatives dictated by private and state initiatives, it might also been viewed in a different way, as an acknowledgement of the way in which the means of human action are imbricated in the 'tools' we have at our disposal. The seed in this conception (via the act of planting) becomes the site of intentionality and change on a material level. The seed is both the arbiter of intention and change, it is an object that is seen to translate agency and in doing so can be seen as creating a link that did not exist before that modifies both the subject and the object.

In the case of *Eating in Public* (2003 onwards) the seed and the act of planting it, formed the basis of the initial intervention in the narrow strip of land around the lake. The seeds ability to translate this simple action into a claim for a public commons is read through the diverse responses and reactions from participants, local citizens and detractors. These effects highlighted both the antagonisms that existed in relation to the use and meaning of both public/private space and the part that conceptions of nature play in those uses and meanings. By January of the following year a small

---

[69] As well as more informal distributions *Digger Barley* (2007-8) has been distributed for public use at a number of cultural sites principally at FutureSonic, Manchester and at Manifesta 7 held at various locations throughout Italy in 2008. Here it was cultivated by Floricultura Schullian based in Bolzano, where the resulting harvest was installed as a garden situated in 'The Rest of Now' section of the exhibition curated by the RAQS Media Collective.

number of the original twenty seedlings were already well established in the strip, this highly visible

occupation of the land was witnessed by passers-by and the action of planting was known to local

residents, especially those who had become actively engaged in the street level debates taking place

in the local neighbourhood. It was also apparent that the situation was being monitored by

representatives of the Kamehameha Schools and ELRA. In January the original sign left at the site

near the young saplings had been utilised anonymously as a means of response to the illegal

planting, onto its surface had been written a seemingly apologetic ultimatum instructing the planters

to remove the papaya by March of that year.

Figure 8. Gaye Chan and Nandita Sharma - *Eating in Public* (2004). Mediation advice and instruction for deadline of the removal of the crop left at the site of planting on the back of a composite postcard showing scenes of local landscape and Oahu coastline(anonymous).

A second sign was erected shortly after by Chan and Sharma that reiterated the message of the first and sought to explain the actions of the planting and the rationale that the free food source should remain in that specific location. Within a few days a further response had been delivered this time written informally on the back of a composite of two postcards (see Fig.8). The message somewhat worn from the elements and difficult to decipher recommended the route of impartial mediation. The composite postcard images in many ways encapsulate the dominant visual imaginary of the land around the lake; the images capture scenes of idealised nature, images we might typically associate with the promotional gloss of the tourist industry or the manufacture of visions of a unified national identity. Shown from an aerial perspective both depict distinctly symbolic landscapes, the first a verdant landscape and clear stream on the Hawaii island the second the windswept Oahu coastline.

The 'official' responses left on the sign and on the postcards remained both anonymous and somewhat ambiguous perhaps revealing some uncertainty or disquiet in the voices of those responsible. Despite this it was not surprising that the immature trees were physically removed from the site before the deadline set in the first response had elapsed. However in doing so the land was effectively cleared and exposed, renewing the potential for further unofficial planting. As if to pre-empt the likelihood of this occurrence the space was demarked in more assertive terms. The fence at the centre of the strip was re-built two feet closer to the public highway narrowing the land further but in turn effectively widening the gap between public and private. This strategy was not just a reiteration of a legally defined perimeter, it was a calculated move to prevent any further unsolicited action taking place. The relocation by just two feet was enough to ensure that any future planting would fall foul of public legislation whereby overhanging trees and plants on public highways are subject to immediate removal.   This act was to have further consequences in terms of both the access and use of the immediate area of land and the level of significance that the act of planting held for local citizens. What *Eating in Public* engenders is a form of spatial practice that has

the capacity to enable modalities of social experimentation through both practical and symbolic means.

The project took on an increasingly collaborative aspect through an exchange of ideas and actions with various collaborators. In the first instance local residents who had encountered the saplings and had read the sign became engaged in active discussion and debate over the legitimacy of the actions and questions of access to the lake and land. This debate was carried out at street level though it was quickly carried over into local and national media coverage and public debate. Later as the actions of the Kamehameha Schools and ELRA became more apparent the site was replanted by a group of local residents, this time with more seedlings and a greater range of plant varieties.

With this gesture of planting fruit trees on appropriated land *Eating in Public* proposed an alternative to the state sanctioned use of the space and also provoked a number of antagonisms between different interest groups and the public perception of the lake and land. From the outset this small act encapsulated a series of interconnected concerns from questions about the uneven distribution of resources to the problem of how the designations of public and private operate in a complex series of interactions and power structures. The specific context of this action at the edges of urban sprawl reminds us of how the natural and virtual commons are often positioned in close 'proximity' to one another in both spatial and conceptual terms. However just what constitutes this urban commons and what a study of its mechanisms offers perhaps requires further elucidation.

The Urban Commons and 'Unruly' Ecologies

On one level the notion of a distinctly *urban* commons is a means by which we might highlight the squeeze on control and access to our public or communal spaces in urban spatialities as they increasingly become organised around principles of free capital expansion, privatisation and scopic control. Such contestation over and erosion of public space is well documented in examples taken from cities of the global north.

In the case of New York City David Bollier (2002) opens his account of the shrinking north American commonwealth with an evaluation of an urban commons found in what was to become the community gardens of the Lower East side. These 'public' spaces emerged in Manhattan during the 1970's and their presence and collective uses were a source of claims to legal occupation and ownership of public land. These communal gardens or cultivated urban natures established on what was urban brownfield, considered useless by developers became the site of contestation when they became identified for land brokering led by the new city administration. Ironically the only protection for these urban commons was the eventual securing of these spaces in land ownership rights.

In a similar story of an attempt to reclaim the public realm from the public by dominant social forces Anna Minton (2009) tracks the erosion of shared space in UK cities in tandem with large scale redevelopment schemes and the growth of a surveillance society. These are factors that have been instrumental in reshaping the dockland areas and inner city spaces of London, Cardiff[70] and other urban centres in the U.K, in ways that undermine the vitality of the urban commons as a space for non-constitutional democratic practices.

In both of these cases it could be argued that it was the unruly materiality of urban natures, in the form of decaying infrastructure, contaminated land or reclamation by undisciplined weeds, that produced the seemingly incompatible impulses of 'making public' and 'making private' urban space. For local urban citizens the unruly and evolving face of urban natures catalyses the desire for a cultivation of a commons space, for the city administration it signifies a corruption of public space, a space 'unfit' for its role as public realm and in need of rehabilitation. In cases like these a neo-liberal agenda is well served through programmes of rehabilitation for our cities, in that they produce risk-

---

[70] Artist and Architect Apolonija Šušteršič's work *Politics "In Space" Tiger Bay Project* (2012) examined the political and social fallout of the Cardiff Bay Regeneration Programme (1987-2000). In collaboration with both supporters and detractors of the scheme she produced two works, the first *The Tiger and the Mermaid* (2012) a short film that intercut the commentary of each group together as a single 'dialogue', the second a live talk-show event that brought these participants together onto a single physical and verbal platform installed at *Artes Mundi 5* (2012), National Museum Cardiff.

free manifestations of a public realm. Such redevelopments often deliver a paradigm of good governance for what was once unruly urban space. As a result these sanitised and orderly variants of urban commons become evacuated of their threat of producing disorder and the dissensus. The creation of a seemingly consensual and democratic public realm is a process that can supress any agonistic dimension to the urban commons thus rendering it politically impotent or democratically indifferent.

On another level thinking through a distinctly *urban* commons offers a way through the impasse that exists between a 'natural' and a 'virtual' conception of the commons and allows for a critical reflection on the implications of post-naturalism on the commons in a more general sense. The commons and the histories of its enclosures often follow a narrative that is underpinned by a separation of nature and culture. Enclosing the commons of nature, to which urbanisation can be seen to have played a significant part is therefore a process of 'de-naturing' nature. Where nature is seen as something separate, something that 'transcends our systems of economics, law, politics and culture' (Bollier 2003: p.59). An urban commons seems on first inspection to be incompatible with such a definition of the commons or commonwealth *of* nature. However what I argue is that by focusing on the 'public' spaces of hybrid urban natures recent examples of spatial practices have not only forged new constituencies of materiality and urban dwellers they have also re-ignited debates over the constitution of our shared commons in an era of rapid urbanisation.

Whilst acknowledging that the 'closed, entropic system of the market interrupts and often supplants the "gift economy" of nature' (Bollier 2003: p.61), it is also important to recognise that the messy hybridity of urban natures is most often, and we could argue will increasingly be, the site within which 'the tensions between nature as a sovereign force and property law as an instrument of human control' (Bollier 2003: p.61) are most often played out and complicated. This phenomenon is often exhibited in longer term projects undertaken by spatial practitioners that foreground the indiscernibility between the natural and the social evident in urban natures, thus problematizing the

idea of the commons in urban contexts as a pure and sovereign territory that transcends human society, its structures and its institutions.

An analysis of the urban commons can bring into sharp focus emerging and future conflicts over scarcity of natural/virtual capital. There is no space in which this becomes more focused or more pressing than in the diminishing and ambiguous 'inter-zone' of the urban commons. For Jonathan Murdoch 'the politics of zoning' (2006: p.127) that seeks to separate the urban from the rural reduces ecological complexity rather than working with its challenges, this reduces indeterminacy and risk, a process that is common in orthodox spatial planning. However the urban commons understood as a natural/social, physical/virtual space can be seen to confound such a convenient zonal logic. If we take the urban commons to refer to a contingent physical space constituted through the waxing and waning of both human and non-human agencies, we arrive at a notion of the commons that emerges from the tensions present in social natures or more precisely urban natures.

We may see evidence of these emerging tensions in the way in which urban natures or urban biodiversity is increasingly being recognised as a distinct object of academic study and political contestation. Somewhat ironically urban natures, a ubiquitous feature of modern cities are increasingly seen as worthy of policy protection and conservation. In such spaces the residual separation of culture and nature, and the designations city and countryside begin to fall away. The recognition of the existence, vitality and importance of urban natures collapses a conservationist logic that often seeks to hold back the process of urbanising nature.

From an ontological perspective, urban natures allow us to imagine the strategies through which more 'healthy' urban ecologies might be formulated. In this respect Whatmore and Hinchliffe articulate the idea of 'recombinant ecologies' that refers to 'biological communities assembled through the dense comings and goings of urban life' (2009: .p.105). Such a concept foregrounds the dynamics of biological formation that result from the interactions that take place between forms of

life rather than the more pristine and self-contained ecologies than supposedly exist outside of the sphere of urban influence. Recombinant ecologies emerge in those spaces that we routinely associate with an urban commons namely parks, hinterlands, waste-ground and in the interstitial zones that punctuate urban spatialities. The ecologies of these urban commons are according to Hinchliffe and Whatmore evidence of how urban environments are best understood as 'living cities' that are 'inhabited with and against the grain of expert designs-including those of capital, state, science and planning' (2009: p.106).

Such a heterogeneous environment formed out of a rich and unruly ecology of things is exactly the kind of 'common ground' on which we might ascertain how 'urban livability involves civic associations and attachments forged in and through more-than-human relations' (Hinchliffe and Whatmore 2009: p.106). In other words such spaces and our interactions within them as citizens (or as researchers) can produce knowledge of vital links between *matter* and *human matters* and the enfolding of multiple agencies in the formulation of a common world.

Public Fruit: Subversive Eating and Acts of Commoning

'By intervening in the geography of space rather than describing it, you alter the texture of people's experience' (David Burns, Matias Viegener and Austin Young 2008).

A re-imagining of the complex alignments between the nature and the social field in urban spatialities is prompted by Fallen Fruit's project *Public Fruit* begun in *2004*. The group have initiated a series of projects since they started working together in 2004, these include *Public Fruit Mappings*, *Nocturnal Fruit Forages* and *Public Fruit Jams* each of which contribute to an exploration of control, access and use of public space through the specific questioning of how urban food sources are identified, accessed and shared. This series of interconnected works and activities have been disseminated in diverse ways including live actions and film alongside forms of photographic and

textual documentation that have been presented in a number of national and international exhibitions of art and architectural practice.[71] Their practice is situated in direct urban experimentation but like related forms of spatial practice the digital environment of the internet is utilised as a means to achieve wider dissemination.

The collaboration by the group began as a response to a 'public' initiative led by the *Journal of Aesthetics & Politics*, calling upon artists and cultural producers to develop creative enterprises that engaged local social, civic, or political concerns. The Public Fruit project clearly emerged from a recognition of the specificities of urban nature found in Silver Lake, a central district of the sprawling city of Los Angeles nestled in the hills and situated around a man-made reservoir which supplies water to downtown L.A. Silver Lake is a culturally diverse area blending residential, commercial and public spaces, which is peppered with an over-spill of urban greenery. The visibility of unique formations of urban nature found in the district, particularly those existing at the margins of adjacent public and private plots of land and properties set the Public Fruit project into motion. As Fallen Fruit have commented, 'walking through our neighbourhood, we in a sense found the solution before we identified the problem' (Burns, Viegener and Young 2012: interview conducted by author). Such an urban landscape is the legacy of the once thriving agricultural sub-sector in the region.

The history of the formation and decline of the citrus industry and the erosion of the 'citrus landscape' in the post-war period as it became subsumed by the sprawl of the city is written into the urban character of modern L.A. In Silver Lake the residues of this once thriving industry are now commonly found enclosed within or on the borders of private residential spaces. This once commercially valuable socio-natural product now exists as a geographically and biologically

---

[71] Fallen Fruit's Public Fruit projects have featured in solo exhibitions that have taken place in a number of arts and cultural centres in California including Machine Project, LA (2006-2009), The Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego (2009) and The Los Angeles County Museum of Art, LA (2010). Their projects have also been included in a number of international exhibitions that explore relationships between art and architecture and urban ecologies. These have included *The Edible City* (2007), Netherlands Architecture Institute, Maastricht, *Actions: What You Can do With the City* (2008 and 2009), Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal, Canada and Graham Foundation, Chicago, Illinois, *The Gatherers*(2008), Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, California ((2008), *A New Cultural Economy*(2009), Ars Electronica, Linz, Austria, *Performing Public Space*(2010), Casa del Tunel, Tijuana, Mexico.

'distributed' fruit grove, whose spread goes relatively unchecked. Fallen Fruit described their first encounter with this undisciplined abundance, commenting that 'on every block, in or over public space, were fruit trees growing un-harvested, with their fruit falling to the ground. We mapped these trees, wrote a manifesto about them, and coined the term "public fruit" to conjure up the potential we saw in them' (see Fig.9) (Burns, Viegener and Young 2012: interview conducted by author).

Fallen Fruit have since gone on to carry out similar mappings in other locations across Europe, North and South America, and continue to carry out a range of urban actions that intervene in the production of urban spaces focusing on the acquisition and distribution of alternative urban food sources (see Fig.10). The series of mappings and actions that constitute their practice are played out in the context of questions about how access to natural resources such as land and food still play a role in shaping the structures and lives of urban citizens, as Fallen Fruit themselves state:

'using fruit as our lens, Fallen Fruit investigates urban space, ideas of neighborhood and new forms of located citizenship and community….we aim to reconfigure the relation between those who have resources and those who do not, to examine the nature in and the nature of the city, and to investigate new, shared forms of land use and property' (Burns, Viegener and Young n.d.).

The *Public Fruit* mapping instigated a playful engagement with issues and appropriations of land use in more developed urban spaces by identifying free food sources available from overhanging fruit trees planted on private property, fruit that might be legitimately and commonly harvested from various public spaces in the city, principally on the sidewalks, streets and parking lots that adjoined private plots and private residences. The unexpected presence and scale of these potentially 'public' fruit stocks and the decision to map their locations and formations across the district gave a distinct shape to the project conflating the programs of aesthetic praxis, cultural activism and civic services. The group have described how the effect was that it 'freed us in a way from the demanding logic of critique and critical art making' as it 'opened the door to an investigation of social realities (alienation, collective urban space, and ecologies of the street)' (Burns, Viegener and Young 2012:

Figure 9. Fallen Fruit – *Public Fruit* (2004). Members of Fallen Fruit photographed locating and harvesting fruit found overhanging onto public sidewalks from local residences in Silver Lake. The group produced and distributed *Public Fruit Map* (2004) Silver Lake, Los Angeles, identifying the principle types of fruit found in Silver Lake and the specific locations where this 'public fruit' could be harvested.

interview conducted by the author). Fruit such as bananas, peaches, avocados, lemons, oranges, apples and plums are grown widely in this region in a urban space of moderate density, however much of it is left neglected and unused by the local human population, often due to the abundance of production in such a fertile region and the low levels of consumption by the private owners. The maps were made available for public display and circulation and were used to promote the process of similar mappings across the city by other participants and residents. The project attempted to initiate a network of mappings that could take place in other urban centres and proposed a re-imagining of our habitual relationship to the urban environment.

Remapping the urban in this way highlights the ambiguities of property law in relation to public-private urban space, where legitimate access to and ownership of natural resources and the legacies of the enclosure of the commons are brought into question. The activities of 'commoning' once a feature of pre-industrialised societies have all but disappeared following the historic power struggles over land use, labour and life that have formed modern and contemporary city and nation states.

Though in principle 'common' land would be owned by individuals or town and city governments, the right to its resources or its use was to be shared by the community as a 'commonwealth'. This creation of private and public spaces came at the expense of commonly owned property and informal and communal ways of organising life. Common land was not only re-organised as private property but also as public space for the public use. New city and nation states expropriated common lands as a resource base for fuelling capitalist markets for labour and trade, this process included the use and control of public space. Seen in this way public space is governed by a 'public will' that conceals the fact that 'public' does not refer to the populations of a given space. Instead in a process of eroding common land for the growth of public space the public will serves as a means to legitimise the control and access to space in relation to the governance of accepted citizenship and 'citizenry'.

In provoking questions of ownership and access such a project opens a wider debate as to the purpose of, and use of, public space, and in doing so asks what public does this space legitimize or exclude? 'Much of our early work is along the strange line between public and private property. We're fascinated by the grey zone of legal definitions of public space and public resources — everything in our legal property system is designed around ownership and the private' (Burns, Viegener and Young 2012: interview conducted by the author).

In relation to the conflicts over natural resources that propagate at the borders of the public and private we might also see how such a project articulates the difficulties in separating social discourse and social organisation from non-human entities. Land and natural resources play a pivotal role in the construction and stability of social formations and social discourses such as politics, citizenship, labour and the development and expansion of market economies.

The *Public Fruit* re-mappings also urge us to rethink the supposed distance between urban and agrarian societies, reminding us of how the developmental history of the city has been shaped by the availability of flows of socio-natural commodities like food. The successful expansion of urban space can be seen in close parallel with the settlements that have taken place between social structures and natural resources. Human communities have successfully developed semi-stable networks that have not only fed cities but have also affected their structures and rates of growth. Markets and economies have formed around the complex flows of socio-natural commodities that circulate through food webs, linking systems of production at the periphery of the urban space, deemed the spaces of nature, to the centres of urban conurbations, considered to be spaces of society. In this way urban space has not figured in the production of food, instead it becomes its most dominant consumer. The apparent availability of food stuffs in the form of fruit outlined in the *Public Fruit* maps testify to the more complex relationship between social and natural entities in the constructed spaces of the city, what it also indicates is the potential for challenging the dominance of existing models of food production, consumption and distribution.
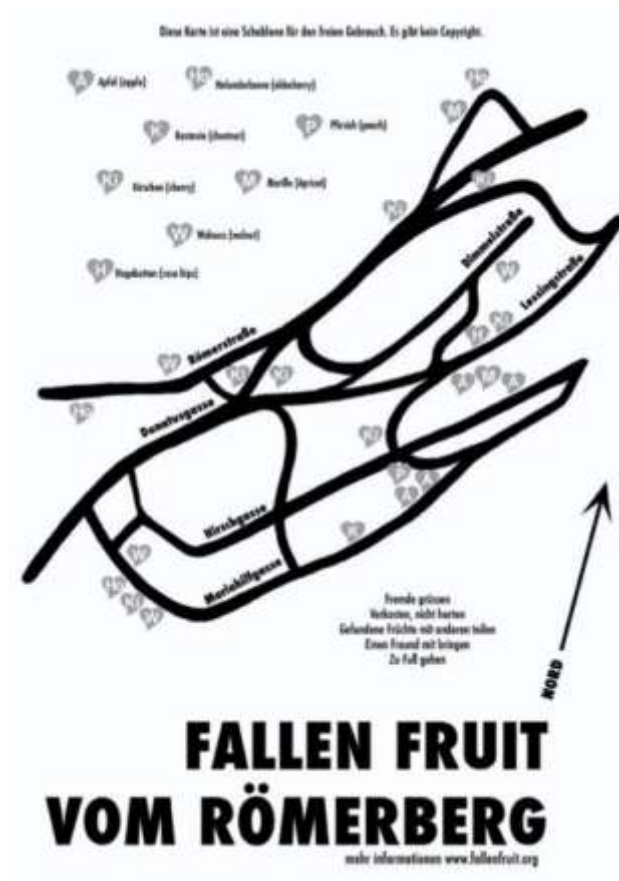
Figure 10. Fallen Fruit – *Public Fruit* (2004 onwards) *Who Owns the Fruit* (2008), poster made for public display in Linz, Austria. Like their earlier mapping of Silver Lake, Los Angeles Fallen Fruit made a similar *Public Fruit Map* (2008) for the residents of Vom Römerberg, Linz, Austria.

As well as forms of mapping, the *Public Fruit* project also instigates urban interventions and social interactions by leading cross community participative actions such as *Nocturnal Fruit Forages* and the production and distribution of free *Public Jam*. The *Nocturnal Fruit Forages* invite participation from local residents and passers-by, following the *Public Fruit Maps* to survey existing sources of fruit and to locate new sources outside of the mapped areas. Mimicking the visual appearance and operations of civic institutions Fallen Fruit co-opt forms of public 'dress' and 'address' to lend their activities an official gravitas, performing both the identities and languages associated with public advocacy. These forages initiate a sharing of both resources and ideas often bringing together diverse users of public space and the owners of the private land on which the food sources are planted. These gatherings and the series of discussions that take place on the ground as a result of them, at times both convivial and agonistic, identify and generate opportunities to challenge the existing forms of access to, and distribution of, 'public' fruit and by extension the 'public' good (see Fig.11). They have also had physical effects and have been instrumental in attempts to expand the existing food sources by prompting both planned and spontaneous participative planting of fruit crops at the edges of private-public land, an aspect of the project that has been prompted by public participation and the informal negotiations that have taken place between the various interests of local citizens.

This call for the shared development of marginal public-private land has been echoed in the installation of publicly displayed signs that announce the proposed transformation of use in the local area. Fallen Fruit have linked this strategy to attempts at more permanent transformations of public space using both unofficial and official lines of collective action. In parallel to unsolicited urban actions such as the transplantation of unused or unwanted fruit trees from private to public land, the project has included the drafting of collective proposals to city government in an attempt to establish permanent public fruit parks.

Figure 11. Fallen Fruit – *Nocturnal Fruit Forages* (2004 ongoing). Fallen Fruit have carried out numerous forages in Silver Lake and elsewhere. These 'guided walks' foster both planned and serendipitous encounters with a range of participants. Informing those taking part of the availability of such food sources has resulted in some locations being over-harvested raising further questions about who has a right to this 'public' resource.

Such initiatives are exercises in testing the potential of transforming peripheral or neglected spaces such as those dominated by the infrastructure of water networks that manage the L.A. River, into 'functioning landscapes' that might operate under more communitarian systems of exchange. The more ephemeral nature of the nocturnal fruit forages however hold the potential to act on urban environments and subjects in a more immediate and perhaps less predictable way, operating as a more spontaneous and unregulated forum for questioning the uneven access to resources in urban spaces, and intervening in the politics of relations that produce and control these spaces. In Fallen Fruit's own words 'asking people to eat the fruit they find growing in public space has a strangely transgressive potential' that the forages clearly seek to deploy (Burns, Viegener and Young 2012: interview conducted by the author). In these informal gatherings diverse interests and actors are drawn into temporary re-alignments, where boundaries between legal and illegal, public and private, natural and cultural are exposed as mutable and contingent. Establishing new imaginaries and alternative dialogues about existing social formations involves finding new ways to speak and act, in and with, our lived environment, to challenge habitual thought and action. In order to speak about social bonds *Public Fruit* succeeds in mobilizing nature using land issues and the resources it provides to actualize new ways of acting together.

Forging a series of novel configurations of human participants and the natural entities that flourish in the immediate constructed environment of the city, not only catalyses social interactions between diverse citizens but also reconfigures the position of nature and food resources in the urban matrix in a way that reverses the dominant pattern of city as a space of consumption. The *Public Fruit* Jams have been utilized as a way of extending *Public Fruit* into a regular feature of communal life in the city, and can be seen as a further dissemination of the ideas of the project in the form of gift economy that in fact characterizes all of the actions including the mappings and nocturnal forages. In these annual events people are invited to participate in communal jam making using fruit from night forages or by bringing their own fruit supplies (see Fig.12). Each batch is made collaboratively

in small groups of diverse residents and is shared out between them; any extra jars are then distributed amongst visitors to the event and other participants in the local neighbourhood.

This aspect of the Public Fruit project reveals a desire to initiate a mechanism that implants material processes into social experiment, linking matter to human matters. Reflecting on the potential of small-scale material processes found in the transformation of bio-form into food, Fallen Fruit describe their fascination with the possibility of harnessing our intimate relationship to cooking and eating for the creation of new social rituals.

Figure 12. Fallen Fruit – *Public Fruit Jam* (2004- ongoing). These public events have taken place in a number of small scale art and cultural venues including Machine Project, LA, often spilling out onto public sidewalks as passers-by become spontaneous participants.

For them the Public Fruit Jam 'is a playful way to create a temporary public, people who don't know each other improvising (jamming) and collaborating in making experimental fruit jams together' (Burns, Viegener and Young 2012: interview conducted by the author). As such these communal rituals become the means by which urban subjectivities might be expressed outside the singularising force of consumer identities. There is of course the danger that such a strategy can get lost in a more general cultural phenomenon of nostalgia for domestic scale and local practices as well as an over-emphasis on the local as the singular site of authentic experience, and the small act as the only source of political efficacy. However as Fallen Fruit are quick to point out the jam itself is not the 'art' but the 'by-product of shared experience' (Burns, Viegener and Young 2012: interview conducted by the author), which is the primary constituent of the artistic work. The public jams mix up culinary experimentation with social experimentation, conflicts over our 'natural' commons, embodied in the urban fruit, blend with contestations over our virtual commons resources like labour and leisure.

Returning this source of 'public' food to the public, interrogates the status of the designation *public* and transforms natural resources into an ambiguous form of social (and cultural) capital. Asking firstly, who is the *public* that owns this fruit? And secondly, how such socio-natural products are able to mediate our conceptions of public and common interest? What these public gatherings attest to is the role that materiality plays in co-constructing societal units and patterns especially in relation to consumer practices and practices orientated around labour and leisure.

Temporary Kitchen: How a 'Public' Might be Fed and Formed

Mirroring this exploration of a public defined by our material practices and our relationships to land and food is the project *Temporary Kitchen* (2012) a research laboratory and series of cooking actions led by the artist collective ThisLandyourland, co-founded by Louise Ganz and Ines Linke. The project conceived as part of a long term international residency program at the Jardim Canadá Centro de

Arte e Technologia (JACA) in Nova Lima, Brazil began as a survey and mapping of the scarcity of food sources and the prevalence of domestic scale food production in the local district.

Nova Lima is small city located in the Minas Gerais state close to the capital Belo Horizonte. In and around the city are situated several large scale mines that extract a range of minerals and gold. Jardim Canadá is a developing district which in part sits on the limit of one of these active mining sites, the activities of which mark the local landscape. As such it is a place 'known for its red soils, mineralized and waterlogged streets, eucalyptus plantations and plenty of dust' (Ganz 2013: interview conducted by the author). These peripheral areas of the neighbourhood include areas of open land which are often appropriated by local citizens for small scale plantations and economic enterprise. Other more densely urbanized areas feature residential and commercial blocks with highly compressed public space at street verges and intersections. As such the urban identity of Jardim Canadá is defined by a kind of ecological tension as different social actors vie over space and resources. This tension exists as different social relations are formed through the seemingly oppositional enterprises of extracting (geological) and implanting (biological) material resources.

ThisLandyourland in common with Fallen Fruit walked these spaces mapping them in terms of their relationship to food production including domestic production, unsanctioned production and the availability of the 'products' of urban natures. As Ganz has commented they became 'interested in the complex logistics of production, distribution and consumption', mapping these local economies was therefore a means to 'investigate the modes of micro-scale production' (Ganz 2013: interview conducted by the author). Negotiating with local inhabitants ThisLandyourland went on to stage a series of actions in the district constructing a series of temporary kitchens which carried out culinary experiments with food sources brought to them by residents (see Fig.13). Each kitchen developed recipes in line with the specific ingredients sourced from the adjacent blocks.

Figure 13. ThisLandYourLand – *Temporary Kitchen* (2012). Locally sourced ingredients became the basis of a series of 'collaborative recipes'. Prepared and cooked on site these food resources were consumed by local residents at various street venues in Jardim Canadá.

Five kitchens were established at different sites around the district processing a diverse range of food sources into products for street consumption, each event acting as the initiator of public gathering as well as a catalyst for small-scale economic enterprise (see Fig.14). In a similar way to Ganz's earlier collaboration with Breno Silva *Banquetes: Expansões Do Doméstico* (*Banquettes: Expanding the Domestic*) (2008), a work comprised of five site-specific public lunches, *Temporary Kitchen* (2012) explores the extent to which 'food is a mediator between people, in the act of cooking, as well as in the act of eating' (Ganz and Silva 2008: p.67).

Figure 14. ThisLandYourLand – *Temporary Kitchen* (2012). Five 'public' kitchens were established for the duration of the project, these kitchens became a means of testing the viability of public access to commons resources and in turn the capacity of those resources to mediate in the material and social practices of the participants.

Cooking and eating rituals which we might locate within the confines of the domestic space are made 'public'. This 'public food' stakes out a territory for examining how a 'public body' is fed and formed.[72]

Temporary Kitchen can be read as a vehicle for researching the 'degree of autonomy or dependency of residents to market economic systems' (Ganz 2012: interview conducted by author), more than this though it is also a way method for testing the extent to which the material resources of the urban commons can determine patterns of labour and leisure. Food production and food consumption link material resources to social practices, a natural commons to a virtual commons. As Ganz has suggested the project was a platform to 'invite people to re-evaluate the notions of autonomy in their way of life, reinforcing the possibilities of building an exchange system, more and more independent from the global neoliberal system' (2013: interview conducted by author).

Both *Temporary Kitchen* (2012) and *Public Fruit Jams* (2004 onwards) are examples of critical spatial practice that test the autonomy that urban subjects possess to express identities not defined solely by our relationship to labour. Each utilise the mediator of food to open access to commons resources, both material and virtual. Through gathering, cooking and eating rituals the shared material resources of our environment mix with the shared virtual resources of collective 'free time'. Each project attempts in its own way, attempts to formulate spaces for urban subjectivities to emerge that are mediated through material practices, and both conflate access to a 'natural' commons with access to a virtual commons. 'Free' time embodies a complex contestation over who gets to share its benefits and for what purpose. 'Free' time or leisure time is a shared capital that has always reflected social power structures and the assignation of societal roles. Crucially though it is its close relationship to the division of labour and its capacity to open access to temporal ruptures of 'unproductive' productivity that makes it such a contested social resource.

---

[72] This strategy can also be found in other urban culinary experiments such as *Enemy Kitchen* (2004 and 2012) by Michael Rakowitz a mobile food truck run by U.S. Iraq war vets serving traditional Iraqi dishes to members of the public and *Cuisine Urbaine* (2003-4) a mobile modular kitchen developed by Atelier d'architecture autogeree (aaa) as device for activating shared meetings, dialogues and exchanges in urban space.

Such contestations are fuelled by the basic rights of access to this resource coupled with the question of its meaningful appropriation, 'free' time is at once decadent, convivial and transgressive. The question of unequal access to this resource should been viewed alongside the equally pressing issue of the ethical and political role that is associated with it. The Latin term otium (leisure) captures both the sense of sporadic and temporary (time) and a withdrawal from an active 'social' life in the sense of a civic duty (freedom). In the case of *Public Fruit Jams* and *Temporary Kitchen* access to and use of this resource is in some sense a subversion of this logic of a withdrawal from an active social life and freedom. Instead it accesses the social capital of 'free' time to open a temporal space for experimental forms of urban subjectivity and public assembly, to assert a freedom to remake social life.

This is no easy task given that in today's culture the urban environment is replete with spaces of organised leisure and 'active leisure' can often be seen to resemble and connect areas of economic activity. Productive leisure operates within a highly managed system of commerce and capital. Resisting such productive forms of leisure involves the reconfiguration of an 'inactive' leisure that is not pre-programmed or predetermined by socio-economic forces. As such contemporary otium (leisure) could be viewed as a commons resource over which urban citizens contest a highly symbolic capital that of time equated to free will. Contestations over leisure are about how the time when we are not defined by our labour should best be put to use. As urban subjects this 'free time' is a source of capital through which we exchange ideas and practices that might be deemed productive, corrective or even subversive in the context of civic society.

Given the potential for 'inactive' leisure to provide temporal ruptures from dominant expressions of urban identities aligned to socio-economic imperatives, it is easy to see how leisure time is a highly politicised component of our virtual commons. To be inactive or to occupy a space for inactivity, in socio-economic terms at least, is to produce a dangerous 'unproductiveness'. Time like space is an active site of contestation, a source of capital that has recently become a subject and material for

contemporary aesthetic praxis. This is perhaps due in part to the status that cultural production holds as a form of immaterial labour, but it is also about the correspondence between time as potential source of capital and the sustainability of an economic exchange system that appears to trade on materiality.

Fallen Fruit's inter-related projects can be seen to mine the interrelationships between material resources and social processes and in doing so they interpose in the formulation of a 'public' and the temporal capital we work with to form such a commonality. In this way they reveal some of the ways in spatial practice has been manifested as an urban 'commoning' revealing and initiating distinctive agential processes as it works with and *on* existing natural/social alignments and churn ups our urban commons.

Practices like those initiated by *Eating in Public* (2003 onwards), *Public Fruit* (2004 onwards) and *Temporary Kitchen* (2012), infiltrate the complexities of the hybrid collective of the city through a creative proliferation of connectivity between natural and cultural entities. The intervention of these projects into urban and community space reinforces the uncertainty that governmental institutions and forces of privatization hold over the legality of such actions in public space. Such practices shift the perception of control over access to natural resources by setting a precedence for the effective re-appropriation of urban space for unofficial forms of resource sharing and distribution by the public. Alongside this, *Public Fruit* offers the possibility of re-imagining the ways in which urban space and urban citizens might be connected in more sustainable relations with natural entities in ways that create alternative urban ecologies.

Fallen Fruit locate this process in the context of the particular energies present in our urban commons, describing the *Public Fruit Jams* as 'our original template for generating new rituals, events or formats to express social ideas in kinetic and nomadic ways' (Burns, Viegener and Young 2012). Switching to a mode of aesthetic praxis predicated on the generation of heterogeneous assembly between various actants enables us to broaden our conception and understanding of both

agency and collective participation. Asking us, in what ways might humans and non-humans be assembled together and act together? Reflecting on this question further the following chapter will foreground urban space as the principle site in which such assemblies take place and where claims to the urban commons interrogate the basis of democratic principle and the need for a revised political ecology.

Ecological Assemblies

'Democracy exists only through its own acts and through the fabric of common life that these acts weave…the horizon of equality is not what determines a march towards an unattainable state of perfection. It is what frames the stage on which we can think and act.'

(Jacques Ranciere cited in Höller 2007: p.463)

'against the background of the many crises that we are facing today - starting from the recent global economic crisis, and moving to the energy and food crises, and the associated environmental crisis - thinking and practicing the commons becomes particularly urgent.'

(Massimo de Angelis cited in An Architektur 2010: p.1)

In the previous chapter I argued that urban spatialities and the politics of urban space cannot be disentangled from the notion of a material environment within which we construct our temporary and contingent partitioning of ecological space. An urban commons was proposed as a distinctive site of interaction between 'things', a site that makes manifest the transferences of matter into human matters and highlights the points of contact between the material and virtual commons. This chapter seeks to develop this line of enquiry further by asking what forms of commonality or democratic participation by urban subjects are possible when we assemble around or with 'things'. Furthermore it seeks to consider what kinds of provisional ecological space are being instigated by critical spatial practice to foster unique forms of urban commoning and forge claims to the city through participative urban governance.

By examining the ways in which we assemble in an urban commons I ask whether the recognition of non-human forces in an agential regime can assist us in marking out and making sense of contemporary affirmations of non-constitutional democratic discourse and the shifting modalities of consensus and dissensus in urban spatialities. As the fault lines in the current settlement between socio-economic forces and 'nature' are being exposed and as a new rapprochements between nature and human culture are being sought, I ask what kinds of self-organisation, micro-political action and democratic process are emerging 'on the ground' when contemporary spatial practice operates in an ecology of agencing?

To these ends I will sketch out some of the ways in which critical spatial practice and the cultural networks they stimulate have begun to reveal the role of the material environment in making claims to the city and actuating new forms of urban governance. With this in mind we might begin to evaluate the relationship between contemporary urban commoning and the formulation a revised political ecology.

The Political Ecology of an Urban Commons

With the accelerated growth of urban spatialities, the city or 'polis' of today has intensified concentrations of human population and sociality operating as a mechanism through which notions of the 'public' and the 'democratic' are simultaneously limited and de-limited. The efficiency of such a mechanism can be attributed to the means by which such notions can be 'aired' or 'put into practice'. In both cases, be it through discourse or through action, the urban commons has long featured as the forum or site for democratic struggle. But democratic principle is a hard fought process that is mediated through an array of material and immaterial tools that we employ to instigate, regulate and sustain its workings.

Sloterdijk (2005) has presented a compelling account of the premise of democratic principle, its spaces and its mechanisms, in what he has termed an 'atmospheric politics'.[73] Using this rather enigmatic term he describes the specific conditions within which democracy is made possible. In his analysis the polis is the principle site for the construction of 'public' space, it is however a site of contradiction and contention, as he describes it: 'the space of the polis is evidently a place of enhanced improbabilities. In order for politics to consolidate as the art of the improbable, procedures have to be developed from which citizens arise as agents of coexistence in the improbable' (2005: p.948). As such the democratic space, the 'public' space or 'public' sphere is 'not just the effect of people assembling, but in fact goes back to the construction of a space to contain them and in which the assembled persons are first able to assemble. The agora is the manifest

---

[73] Sloterdijk presents these ideas in a paper of the same title which is based on a lecture given at a conference titled 'Atmospheres for Freedom: Towards an Ecology of Good Government' hosted by the Giorgio Cini Foundation, Venice Sept. 15-17, 2004.

urban form thereof' (Sloterdijk 2005: p.948). From its Greek origins the 'agora' is an open space for assemblies and exchanges, or a site for gathering together a form of civic life. For Sloterdijk democracy exists within the confines of proto-architectonic immersive spaces (atmospheres) that seek to stabilise the essential (and somewhat contradictory) virtues of political citizens, in the form of their capacity to become both actor (participant) and spectator (observer) in the democratic process. According to Sloterdijk in order for such a process to operate effectively the ideal of democracy is that 'the entire public domain would have to consist of this type of agent' (2005: p.948).

Such a description reminds us of how democratic participation is a product of the staging of effective democratic spaces *and* the balancing of oppositional positions, the greek art of *isosthenia*, understood as 'the principle of the equal power of agents/arguments' (Sloterdijk 2005: p.950). The implications of this are profound for our understanding of an urban commons where both *space* and *countervailing powers* are being enclosed or squeezed out. Zizek warns us that the construction of 'climatized' communal, or perhaps what we might call consensual spaces, run the risk of becoming an 'urban-architectural version of the enclosure of the commons' that exclude 'potentially "toxic" subjects', thus perverting democratic principle (Zizek 2011: p.268). Sloterdijk too provides a warning of the erosion of democracy particularly where there is a 'shortfall in isosthenia', something that can result from a shrinking of available space for assembly and a reduction in the effective exercise of conglomerate power (2005: p.951). The polis or the wider agora of 'public' space in a historical context was seen as the 'matrix for a broader distribution of powers in which repeatedly new isosthenic situations could be practiced', the viability of such a distributed form of democracy is today, something that is at risk of being compromised, or its reach significantly curtailed (Sloterdijk 2005 p.251).

Henaff and Strong (2001) also contend that the public spaces of urban spatialities operate as a contemporary agora in this way. Thinking of public spaces as part of the distribution of power

foregrounds both the vitality of the urban in formulating and reinvigorating genuine democratic participation and raises the question of what is at stake when such spaces are enclosed. Contestations over, and claims for 'public space', constitute one of the most significant sites through which modern democratic assembly is a made possible. As Henaff and Strong assert public space thus 'designates an ensemble of social connections, political institutions and judicial practices' (2001: p.35). There is no doubt that both the invocation of democratic principle and the establishment of democratic process is thus bound up with our material and physical environment as much as it is with collective human desire.

In his recent analysis of what he terms 'insurgent space' Jeffrey Hou (2010) surveys a wide range of urban practices that demonstrate how political utterances and actions, as articulations of democratic process, are mediated through urban space. Hou is quick to point out that space or what we call 'public space' is vital in that it provides the ground on which we construct a participative polity and build a sense of commonality. Following his analysis public space is pivotal in 'serving as a vehicle for social relationships, public discourses, and public expressions', under such a description it is clear that 'space' for the assembly of a 'public' is 'not only a physical boundary and material setting' (Hou 2010 p.2). Hou's commentary recognises the fundamental link between the spaces in which we gather and express a commonality with our capacity to build and 'work on' the wealth and health of the socius. The urban commons is therefore assembled *in* and *through* spatial relations, *in* and *through* materiality.

Sloterdijk (2005) has suggested that our capacity to formulate commonality or democracy depends on our ability to capture, formalise and temporalize such processes in objects. For him the list of speakers in the agora, or the modern agenda, is historically one such crucial object in that it was able to mediate the process of isosthenia, giving the temporal sequences of debate a spatial dimension whereby opposing positions can be weighed together. However outside this rarefied atmosphere and in the very different temporal climate of contemporary urban spatialities, the wider agora of

'public' space plays out a more contingent version of democratic principle mediated by an array of objects, both human and non-human. The vitality of an urban commons (as a vital democratic space) is a measure of *who* and *what* is permitted to assemble and in what ways they can be seen to co-exist. The practice of new isosthenic situations occurs as we become observers *of* and participants *with* the arguments/actions of diverse agents.

One way to consider the role of critical spatial practice in these terms is to focus on their capacity to generate new constituencies of actors and actions, between 'things' and to formulate different claims to the city that test the spaces of a 'distributed democracy'. Such claims for other forms of ownership and occupation are a means through which the mechanisms of urban governance can be re-inscribed with the language of a 'public script', and space can be reinvested with an emancipatory potential by asserting its role in the formation of non-constitutional democratic discourse and praxis. As such the notion of an assembly of 'things' may assist our understanding of space as a physical actualisation of 'public policy' (through the imposition of property law, the attribution of land rights and the assertion of the tenets of citizenship) and space as a mediator of 'public polity' (through affirmations of non-constitutional democratic discourse and shifting modalities of consensus and dissensus). The provisional settlements made between public policy and public polity and how they are woven from the material fabric of urban spatialities are the impetus for the distinctive forms of research, experimentation and action carried out in the examples of critical spatial practice that follow.

Vacant Lots: Making Private Public and Assembling with 'things'

'abolishing the idea of the project as a guiding plan determining what will occur in the borrowed lots, we began to identify the *Vacant Lots* as an open set of propositions, as ground for intersections and for collisions of difference'

(Breno Silva on behalf of the Ambulante Construções Group 2009: p.100)

The *Lotes Vagos: Occupações Experimentais (Vacant Lots: Experimental Occupations)* (2004-8) project platform was a long term collective action initiated by artists and architects in collaboration with the citizens of Belo Horizonte, the capital and largest city in the southern state of Minas Gerais, Brazil. The project began in 2004 and continued up until 2006 when it was extended to the city of Fortaleza the state capital of Ceará, where a series of actions took place from 2007 until 2008. The *Vacant Lots* project consisted of a series of physical interventions in a variety of urban wastelands and periphery spaces located at different sites across the city (see Fig. 15), producing ephemeral actions and semi-permanent initiatives/structures, in collaboration with a diversity of participants.

The physical interventions and actions in these lots were the culmination of extensive research into the location and character of these contingent spaces by the Ambulante Construções Group (Walking Construction Group).   This research exercise involved numerous site visits and the production of maps and data documenting the physical, social and economic character of each lot and its immediate environment. The Ambulante Construções Group formed by artists and architects Louise Ganz and Breno Silva initiated the project as a means of establishing a participative network of collaborative actions between fellow artists, architects and urbanists and the wider community of the city of Belo Horizonte. This network of participants came together to produce a range of 'public' reclamations of privately owned land through processes of negotiation, collaboration and a wide variety of physical actions determined by the existing spatial conditions and relations of each site.

This included activities as diverse as cartographic workshops and urban gardening to the formation of small scale public parks, leisure spaces, commercial ventures and community forums. For Ganz and Silva the underlying goal of creating such a network was an attempt to generate diverse and dynamic strategies for accessing and transforming private lots currently abandoned or devoid of any clearly demarcated function, into multi-use public spaces. Described by Ganz as a 'collective action of experimental urban occupation' (2009: p.84) the *Vacant Lots* project launched a series of strategies through which privately owned disused lots might be 'reclaimed', reconfigured and re-

Figure 15. Ambulante Construções Group – *Lotes Vagos (Vacant Lots) (2004). Typical Vacant Lots.* A wide variety of empty lots are found in central and greater Belo Horizonte these include undeveloped sites and those that have in the absence of clearly identifiable ownership or through informal leasing become sites of small scale urban agriculture.

codified. In this respect the capacity of such a project to perform a series of oscillations between the public and the private within these distinct spatial configurations acts as a measure of the extent to which ruptures can occur in existing spatial hierarchies. Furthermore by focusing their activities on the slippage between the two states of 'private' and 'public' the interactions between the various participants of the *Vacant Lots* project expose the more finely graded agential sequences that can take place between a range of 'actors' in more contingent urban spaces. On another level this project reminds us of how our material environment can be seen to reinforce or transform patterns of habitual behaviour and social interaction.

The initial impetus for the project was to map empty lots in the city with a view to establishing some form of temporary or semi-permanent sanction for public use for these spaces. In this way Ganz saw the project as a way to 'promote negotiations between people that have antagonistic interests about the land and the ways of producing the space' (Ganz 2013: interview conducted by author). What *Vacant Lots* sought to make visible was not only the wide distribution of private lots across the city but more importantly it aimed to expose the motivations, desires and interests of a range of agents whose intentions and actions are articulated through these seemingly small and often insignificant pieces of land.

The mapping of the urban space in this initial phase of the project identified 70,000 vacant lots in a wide variety of locations at the centre and at the periphery of the city (see Fig. 16). This precise mapping calculated that these spaces were equivalent to ten per cent of all available land ownership in Belo Horizonte. Each vacant lot was not however mapped solely to locate it geographically; an important aspect of the process was to establish the character and use of other spaces in the immediate context and the specific nature of its physical size and composition. Tracing existing spatial conditions and relations and locating the space in a wider web of connections between land, material components and quotidian practices (see Fig.17).
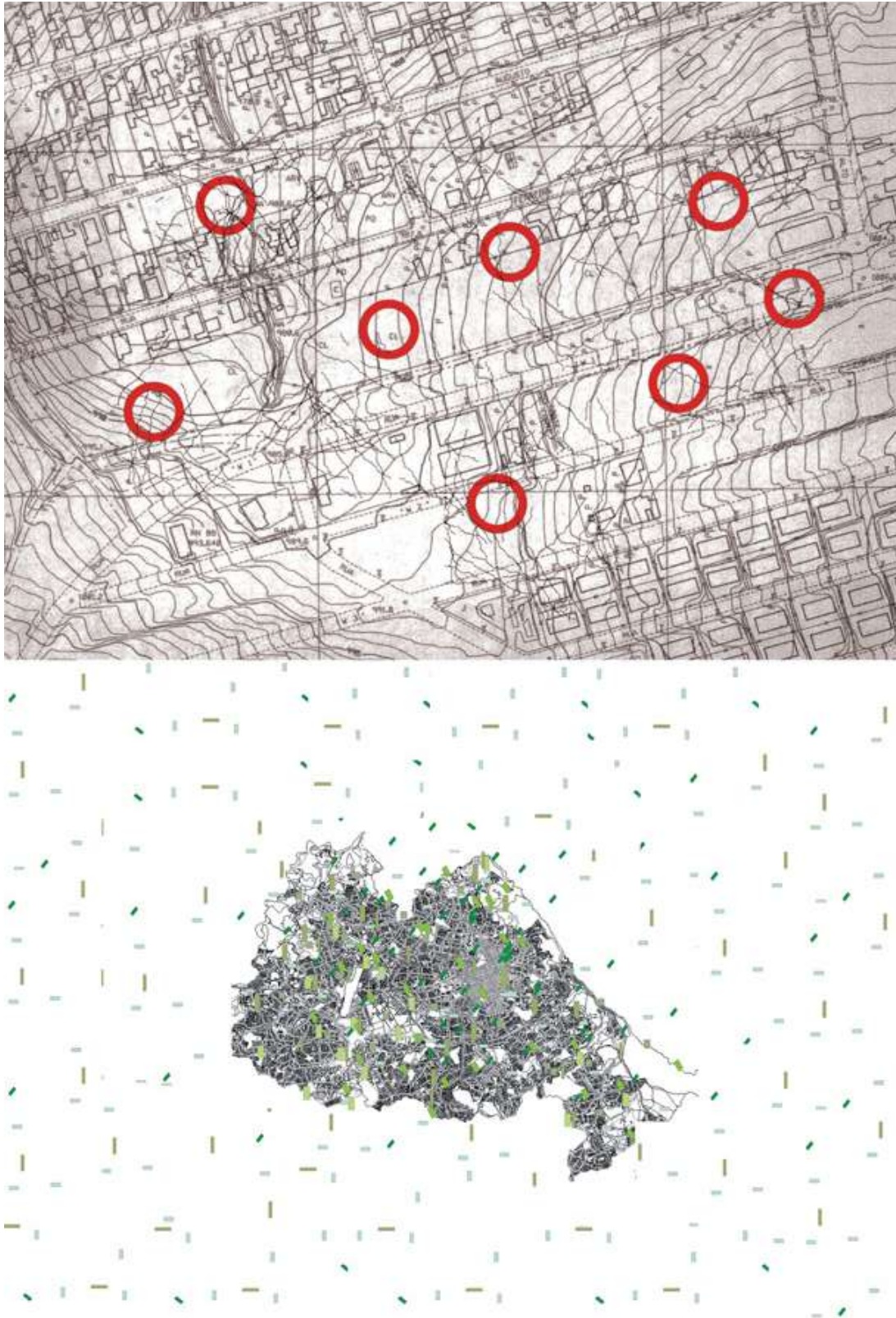
Figure 16. Ambulante Construções Group – Lotes Vagos (Vacant Lots) (2004). *Mapping Vacant Lots, Belo Horizonte.* Left: Visualisation of Belo Horizonte used to illustrate the density of empty lots identifed (upto 70, 000). Right: detail of more precise mapping at street level.
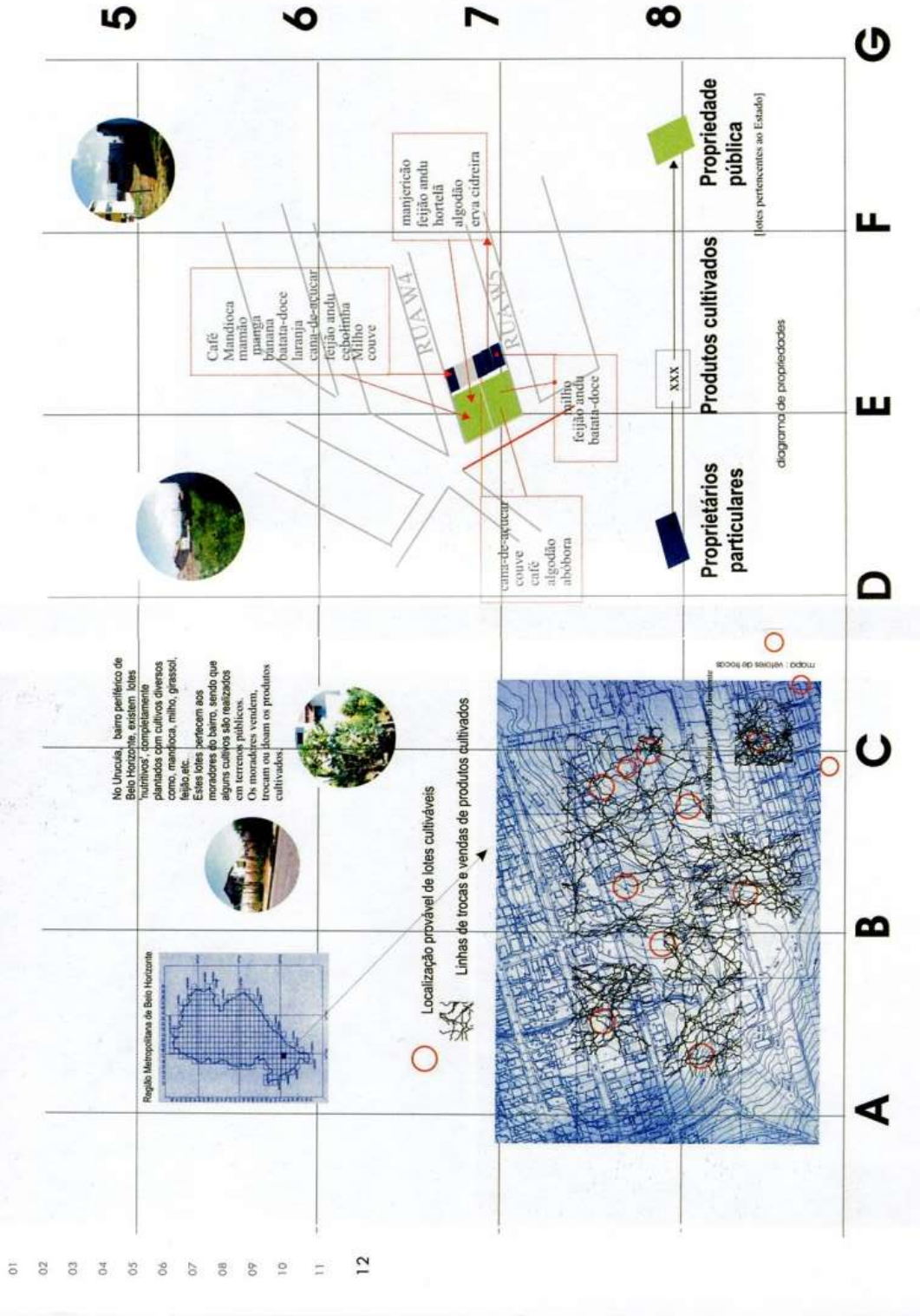
Figure 17. Ambulante Construções Group – Lotes Vagos (Vacant Lots) (2004). *Mapping Vacant Lots, Belo Horizonte*. More detailed mapping of Urucuia neighbourhood. Sample page taken from Ganz and Silva (2009) *Lotos Vagos: Ocupações Experimentais / Vacant Lots: Experimental Occupations* Belo Horzonte. BR: Instituto Cidades Criativas ICC

Ganz has described this mapping process as a way of building a file of 'different spaces: residual spaces, in-between spaces, large empty land, natural urban land, traumatic urban land, industrial areas, self-constructed buildings' (2013: interview conducted by author). The findings of this cartographic analysis were often carried over into the proposals for how such spaces might be occupied or put to use. In some cases these existing connections informed the experimental occupations, building on, and nurturing the emerging properties of the spaces and the patterns of human presence within them.

In one case a vacant lot near a residential area of Nova Granada became the site for an ephemeral intervention entitled *Perimeter* (2005) led by artists Fabíola Tasca, Ines Linke and Rodrigo Borges in collaboration with local residents. The intervention literally mapped the regularity of public incursions into a 2000m² lot as local residents appropriated the space for daily routines. Following the diurnal patterns of movement across the private land that separated local housing from the rest of the district the participants traced the trajectories of this informal passageway. The ritual occupation of this lot was represented as a continuous overlay of lines left in whitewash on ground (see Fig. 18). Over the period of a single day this action carried out by the artists and local residents produced a drawing on the landscape of the desire lines of local citizens, making visible the elasticity of public/private designations in dynamic urban settings. This elasticity or instability between such designations is made visible in a range of occupations instigated by the *Vacant Lots* project, each seeking differing degrees of access to enclosed land. In generating an unofficial network of vacant spaces all over the city the project proposed a rethinking of the divisions between the public and the private highlighting the fluidity between legislative control of space and quotidian spatial practices.

Accessing and occupying such spaces provided a testing ground for the mobility of local communities and the alignments and contestations that take place in processes of natural and cultural appropriations of urban space. In contrast to the official and regulated public spaces in the city, such as parks and squares, the 10% of land represented by the empty lots offered the potential for a

more spontaneous incorporation into the everyday lives of local citizens, through the creation of alternative systems of neighbourhood cooperation, and the diversity of occupations and occupants that might be installed within them. This spontaneous incorporation and transformative potential was for Ganz something that arose from an 'observation of a daily practice', acknowledging how existing socio-spatial praxis constitutes a 'proposition to artists and architects to think about how to act…promoting the encounter between professionals and local communities' (2013: interview conducted by author).

Figure 18. Ambulante Construções Group – *Lotes Vagos (Vacant Lots), Perimeter* (2005). Image shows the physical mapping of incursions taking place in a 2000m² lot as local residents pass through and appropriate private space as they go about their daily routines.

Given the proximity and composition of these spaces in relation to the local populations the lots also provided an opportunity to re-imagine the complexity of uses that are often an aspect of 'unofficial' city life. Issuing claims for these spaces to be 'made public' and therefore put to use in more spontaneous or unplanned ways sets up a vital counterpoint to a dominant model of urban planning. This model is one that often seeks to synchronise desirable patterns of urban renewal, regeneration

and gentrification with landmark architecture, the accumulation of capital and striated spatial management. Mapping the existence and ubiquity of such spaces in the cities of the developed and developing world thus points to the ambiguities and ambivalence inherent to land ownership as well as the uncertainties they generate over whose interests they may be made to serve or mediate.[74]

Despite attempts to regulate and organise public space, the constitution of the 'public' and 'public life' often happens informally, and often in the more 'fluid' spaces found over the broad expanse of the city or at its peripheries. These spaces are occupied and put to use in a wide variety of ways, sometimes legally and sometimes illegally. Peripheral spaces therefore reflect the diversity of the appropriations by the marginal communities who come to inhabit them. Land at the edge of cities like those found in Belo Horizonte represent the intersections of city and nature, the public and the private. Consisting in many cases of small plots of land employed for small-scale agrarian use and improvised makeshift dwellings, these spaces are a particularly precarious area of the city, where ownership and designations of use can be subject to constant negotiation and dispute on an almost daily basis. This precariousness is the effect of the tensions between, on the one hand, the spontaneous emergence of new forms of public polity, as citizens operate more organic systems of ownership and use, and on the other, the efficacy of official public policy to regulate such systems.

In many cases these peripheral areas are residual spaces, spaces that are left over, after the unsuccessful implantation of architectural and social infrastructures. As such they are easily assimilated into a network of corridors and islands of urban natures, evading the strict rubric that defines land ownership and land rights. Devoid of any clearly demarcated function these spaces generate usable plots formed from both deliberate and accidental subdivisions of land, in the case of Belo Horizonte small areas of urban/rural terrain set aside for future construction or economic use.

---

[74] This potential for a re-imagining of vacant urban space is also a feature of *Guide to the Wastelands of São Paulo* (2006) a self-published book made for public distribution by the Spanish artist Lara Almarcegui. Made as part of a series of similar guidebooks to other cities such as Bilbao and London, the text identifies spaces within the urban environment that have no fixed use or those that appear unused or 'derelict'. Almarcegui's unofficial guides present the reader or 'user' with a range of diverse empty spaces pregnant with potential for intervention of appropriation. Spaces that are often overlooked or neglected by the public conscious become the focus for spatial re-imaginings.

Though in many cases these spaces are privately owned they exist as both a physical and psychological connection to more open, public spaces. In the specific context of Belo Horizonte these lots have been part of the urban design for the last two centuries and form the schema of divided terrain that demarks areas into those that are designated public, and those that are claimed as private. However these residual spaces reveal that the dichotomies of public-private and nature-culture are contentious and often extremely porous in the context of rapid urban change. In fact most of the vacant lots were overgrown and were therefore easily adapted into informal green spaces that could be used for various leisure activities or the growing of food. In several cases these lots were already places where micro-ecologies, water and fauna cycles had begun to reclaim economically 'unproductive' land and so presented themselves as environments ready to facilitate creative socio-natural alignments (see Fig. 19).

Figure 19. Ambulante Construções Group – *Lotes Vagos (Vacant Lots)* (2004). *Project sites for Vacant Lots, Belo Horizonte.* Numerous empty lots in the city evidenced a lack of stable identiy composed of a mix of incomplete or failed infrastructures and 'unruly' ecologies.

During the research stage of the project Ganz and Silva visited the Urucuia neighbourhood at the periphery of the city where a large number of the vacant lots had already been occupied by residents who had generated a landscape composed of nutritive vegetation. The owners and users of these plots had created semi-permanent and fertile urban gardens and had established an effective local distribution network for locally produced food. Through their everyday use, the empty lots, were already perceived of as potential spaces where more sustainable urban processes could be implemented and developed in eco-logical terms.

100m² of Grass (2005) was the name given to one of the first experimental occupations of these residual spaces, and was an attempt to establish new relationships within a specific place and with the local population. The diverse processes that characterise interventions like *100m² of Grass* were instigated by challenging negotiations with the proprietors of the lots and the local government, which resulted in an informal 'leasing' of the lots. The negotiations were however effective enough to garner material assistance from the city authorities to clear some of the lots for use by the public, despite their existing status being determined as private land. The open-ended intervention of *100m² of Grass* took place in a 500 m² lot in the heart of the city, which included the remains of the foundations and edifice of a small scale housing development and provoked differing forms and temporalities of participation (see Fig.20).

The action began with the simple activity of planting 100m² of the space with grass to establish a community gathering place or the beginnings of a multi-use space. Early on in the development of this lot local people became involved in a variety of ways, from a local resident who had been in conflict with the landowner over its poor upkeep, who collaborated in the initial planning of ideas, to unemployed residents who assisted with the planting and organised meetings to propose future uses.

Figure 20. Ambulante Construções Group – Lotes Vagos (*Vacant Lots*), *100m² of Grass* (2005). Left: This intervention took place in a 500m² plot of land which contained the decaying foundations of a small-scale housing development. Right: Image shows the initial clearing of a small section of the site and the laying of turf.

Breno Silva has described how residents had differing investments in the 'life' of the space, some commenting that their motivation for participating was because 'the lot is my neighbour', this reflects how these lots, seen in the wider context of urban politics, mediate a range of desires emanating from different social groups (2009: p.102).

By successfully negotiating a sanctioned public occupation of these lots and redefining their status and use, the *Vacant Lots* project can be seen to mandate for a broader distribution of urban governance and for a more distributed form of isosthenic practice. This endeavour meant working with the often oppositional desires of a whole range of interested parties, exposing to Silva himself, and to those contemplating such a cultural enterprise, 'what kind of interests and forces are at stake (but not always in evidence) in the context of *Vacant Lots'*(Silva 2009: p.103). The lot continued to be developed over a period of three months and the process of occupation of the remaining 400m² was carried out by the original participants and others who came to the project later.[75]

Discussing this intervention writer and curator Marisa Flórido César has suggested that this remaining 400m² had been left 'potentially tensioned' by the initial action acting as the 'activation of a network installed in the site and also in the city' as the project began to exceed the confines of the individual lots (2009: p.96-97). During this second phase of development the site was co-opted into patterns of existing social ritual and a number of communitarian projects were created for the space through evolving collaborations and negotiations. These included the establishment of an informal kitchen garden, the organisation of local gatherings and civic meetings, various leisure activities, and temporary small-scale economic activities.

---

[75] The modus operandi of the Ambulante Construções Group in *100m² of Grass* is echoed in a similar intervention by the Mexican art collective Tercerunquinto (A Third of a Fifth). The group consisting of Julio Castro Carreón, Gabriel Cázares Salas and Rolando Flores formed in 1996 have collaborated together on a number of projects which investigate the conflicts between claims of public and private ownership in rapidly changing built environments. In *Public Sculpture in the Urban Periphery of Monterrey* (2003-2006) the group responded to meetings and negotiations with local communities by constructing a rudimentary 50 meter squared platform of concrete in the undeveloped neighbourhood of Los Naranjos on the outskirts of Mexico City. Over a period of three years the group documented the cycle of changing uses of the platform. The simple architecture served as a public plaza facilitating wide ranging activities from social events, educational workshops and food distribution to political and civic meetings. Acting as site through which the needs, interests, and desires of the local inhabitants became mediated.

In the case of *100m² of Grass* (2005) the physical extension of the occupation into the remaining *400m²* produced the paradoxical effect of simultaneously catalysing the desire on the part of urban actors to initiate further changes in the spatial conditions and relations congregating around this lot, whilst generating an anxiety about the sustainability of legal claims to the land by the lot owner. After three months of occupation and experimentation in the lot by the proposers and other local parties the land owner became uneasy with the new uses developed on the site and withdrew the informal lease on the property. The exact reasons for this remain unclear however what the physical and temporal presence of these economic and civic ventures on private space yielded was a highly visible legitimisation of uses other than its current use status as a form of 'unproductive' capital. One of the longer term reverberations of *100m² of Grass* was the success of a number of self-organised initiatives such as the vegetable plantations located nearby in the city that had been established at a similar time and had continued to operate and where local residents had been able to maintain a positive working relationship with the lot owners.

Generating a ground on which differing desires and interests could intersect tests the agoric potential of even the smallest of contested 'public' spaces and the role such spaces can play in mediating our attempts to produce new forms of urban commonality. Other *Vacant Lots* actions also reveal the extent to which an urban commons is assembled *in* and *through* spatial relations, *in* and *through* materiality. *100m² of Grass* is an attempt to reconfigure the manner in which control and access to land use is governed, other *Vacant Lots* interventions make visible the way in which 'public' space is managed and policed to limit forms of assembly, excluding some subjects from participating in potential isosthenic situations that spring up as different claims to the city are made.

In an action entitled *Topography* (2006) a steeply formed lot 25x30m was employed to landscape an urban 'park' for use by local residents, workers from adjoining offices and children from a nearby favela. By utilizing large yellow weatherproof ground covering, a number of congregation and relaxation points were created for public use (see Fig. 21). Responding to the steep contours of the

lot and adapting the existing undulations in the earth, the 'park' was structured around a number of levels that people could utilize to relax, read or simply observe the panoramic view of the city and countryside beyond from the raised vantage point of the sloped ground. This small-scale informal 'park' stood in stark contrast to other more managed public spaces in Belo Horizonte.   The official parklands in the city which often operate as sites for more controlled forms of recreational activity are located within the urban matrix at a number of specific points, often detached from daily community activities and residential areas.


Figure 21. Ambulante Construções Group – Lotes Vagos (*Vacant Lots), Topography* (2006). The distinctive undulations present at the site of this steeply sloped lot were adapted to construct an informal park, adaptations such as implanting trees followed shortly after.

This fragmentation between dwelling space and leisure space results in citizens from disparate neighbourhoods having to go out of their way to frequent these public parks on the weekends, or sometimes simply not at all. Unlike the patterns of movement and occupation established in relation to these official public spaces many of the vacant lots such as the one utilised in *Topography* were in closer proximity to domestic and work spaces and could be more easily integrated into everyday routines. In this lot a diverse group of users from the local neighbourhood began to frequent the 'park' and during the period of the occupation felt comfortable enough to remain in a space which retained a undesignated use in terms of the precise forms of activity that it appeared to sanction.

This fluidity of use was accepted with ease by local family groups who lacked the mobility to access the spaces of 'nature' (or acceptable spaces of socio-natural assembly) cultivated in Belo Horizonte's official civic parks. In this way the informality of the 'park' highlights the link between literal mobility and social mobility, lending itself to appropriations or assemblies of those who cannot routinely occupy those spaces that certify or mediate 'social standing'. *Topography* like other actions/initiatives in the project *Vacant Lots* are compelling in terms of how they work with the specificity of material environments to make claims to the city. As a 'counter-hegemonic proposal' positioned in dialogue with the 'formation of capitalist space' the actions of *Vacant Lots* provide a means of testing the conveyance of public policy and polity through the land and the bio-diversities it might gather and maintain (Ganz 2013: interview conducted by author).

In addition to their collaboration on the *Vacant Lots* project Louise Ganz and Breno Silva devised a parallel project *Kits Ambulante* (*Ambulant Kits*) (2009-11), a series of mobile kits (50x50x20cm) made to be hawked on the street that can be used to transform urban spaces, particularly vacant lots, into sites of food production, leisure and sociability. These kits operate as devices for catalysing informal claims to the city in those spaces whose agoric potential lies in their capacity to be re-codified as 'public' space rather than being left to exist as sites of 'unproductive' capital (see Fig. 22 and 23).
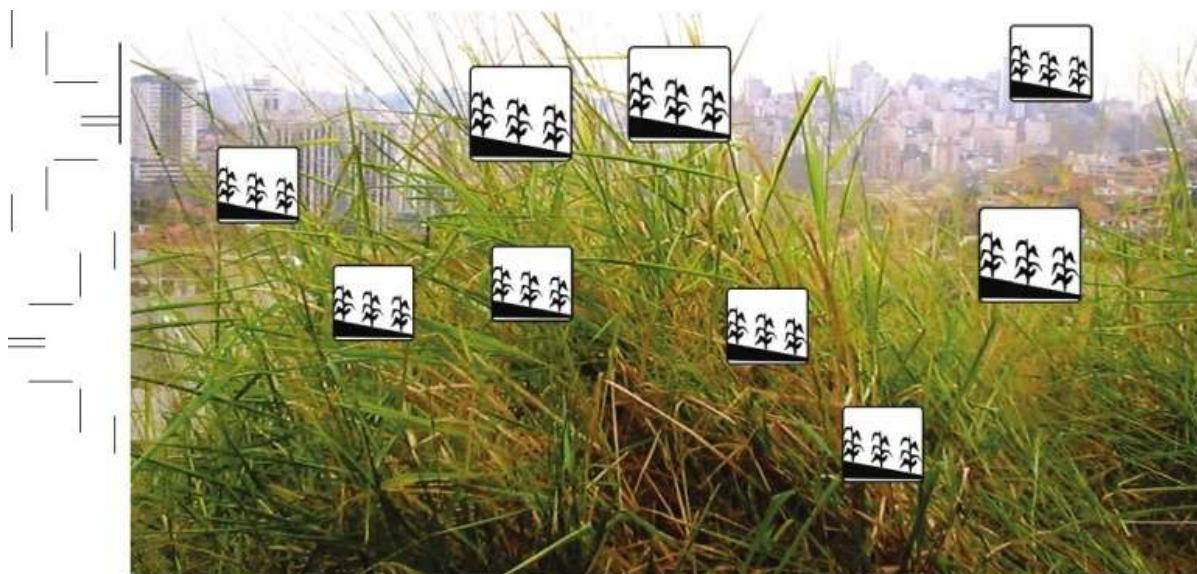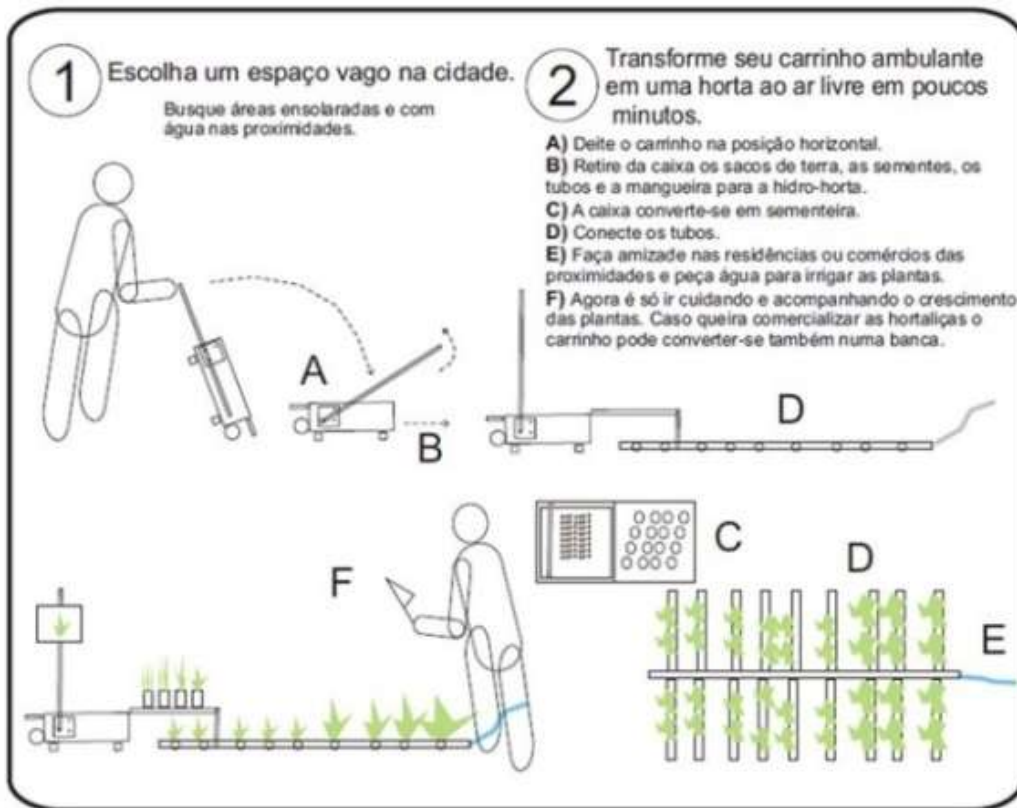
Figure 22. Ambulante Construções Group – *Kits Ambulante* (*Ambulant Kits*) (2009-11). These mobile devises were designed to be transported to, and deployed in vacant lots found in the city. These kits came with instructions and the basic materials needed to implant or instigate a number of collective activities including the cultivation of crops (shown here).
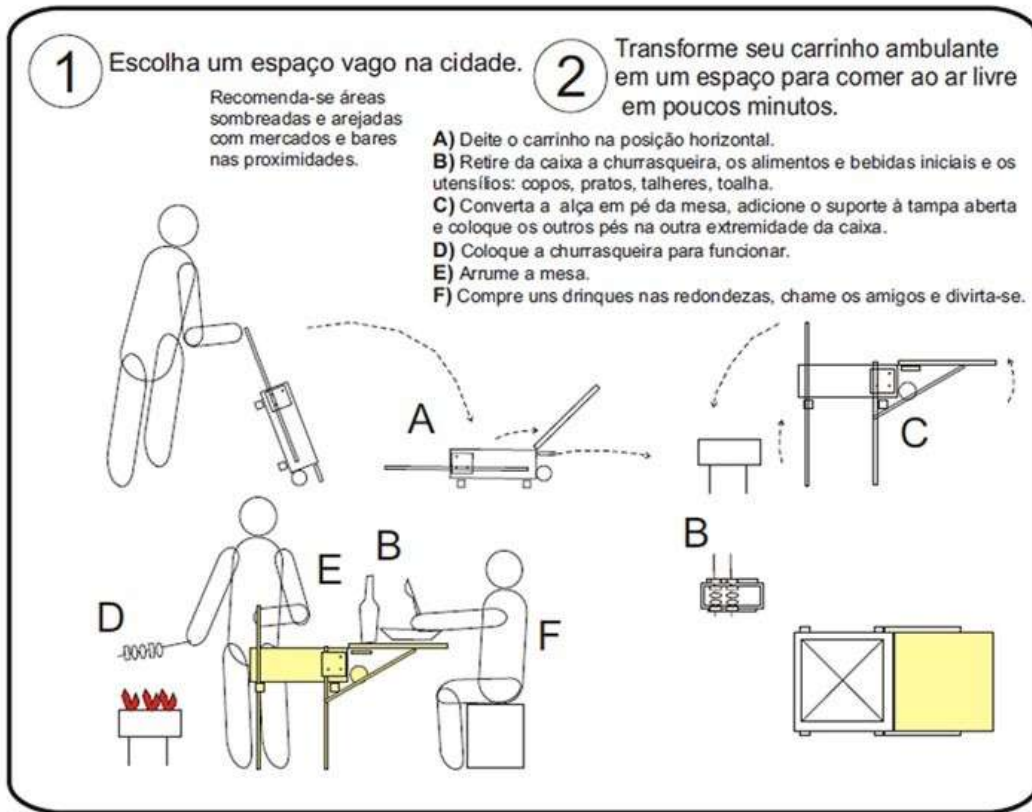
Figure 23. Ambulante Construções Group – *Kits Ambulante* (*Ambulant Kits*) (2009-11). As well as being used to instigate a number of forms of collective production (principally urban agriculture) these devises were also used to encourage forms of sociality and public ritual, such as cooking and eating (shown here).

Both projects locate the specificities of urban conditions and relations in Belo Horizonte to the transitions and transformations taking place in urban morphologies worldwide. According to Ganz 'processes of transformation of urban space in Brazil work according to a developmental logic, progressive, yet unfortunately driven by the logic of cities as unsustainable infrastructures and as a sales territory for the financial market' these projects are therefore a way of 'acting counter to this government and neoliberal proposal' (2013). Despite an intense period of urbanization and expansion of Belo Horizonte and its surrounding municipalities to form a relatively contiguous urban conurbation the city retains clear socio-spatial inequalities and uneven development persists in many areas. These conditions have produced a diverse urban environment in social, economic and physical terms, something that is evident in other rapidly expanding Brazilian and South America cities. This is reflected in the proximity of its urban and 'natural' spaces and its distinct communities which have highly contrasting levels of social mobility and economic security.[76] Despite the appearance of coherency at its urban core Belo Horizonte's more disparate composition is evident in the many examples of unused, undeveloped and indeterminate spaces that are scattered throughout its interconnected and sometimes more self-contained districts.

The Micro-Politics of Critical Spatial Practice

The *Vacant Lots* (2004-8) project can be read as response to this specific urban context and the kinds of spatial condition and relations that it formulates, however this suggests that cultural production of this sort is merely reactive to social and spatial problems. More than mounting a critique of existing socio-spatial configurations what this project reflects is how current forms of spatial practice, regardless of their geo-political location, often share in common the desire to self-initiate socio-spatial experimentation as an alternative spatial methodology. Such a methodology involves

---

[76] Greater Belo Horizonte is in fact a network of smaller cities that are built on a series of hills. The city is therefore interspersed with extensive parklands and is surrounded by tropical forest and mountains. Like other cities in the global south rapid economic growth and a switch from an industrial to service based economy has brought with it increased levels of national prosperity. However extremes of inequality in both material and political terms can be measured by the continued existence of favelas in Brazilian cities like Belo Horizonte and neighbouring Fortaleza as well as in the imbalance of power between social forces in municipal governance, for more on the later see Wood, Terence and Murray, Warwick E. (2007) 'Participatory Democracy in Brazil and Local Geographies: Porto Alegre and Belo Horizonte Compared' in *European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 83, October 2007 pp.19-41

practicing space in non-normative and experimental ways, rather than proposing clear cut answers or homogenized solutions to spatial problems. Stepping into the spaces 'left over' by rapid urbanization processes and capitalist prospecting spatial practice often takes place without recourse to the frameworks imposed by top down planning, or as is the case in architectural culture the interests of a specific client group.

These projects operate together to field a series of cross currents in spatial practice both in terms of the set of concerns that they seek to address and through the spatial tactics that they employ. Engaging the spatial and temporal factors that determine urban morphology, the distributions and porosity of the public and the private, and the changing composition of urban ecologies, these inter-related projects combine research into existent conditions and relations of urban spaces with a series of urban initiatives that seek to catalyse or facilitate micro-political change. It is pertinent then to consider just what is assembled in these micro-political enterprises? And furthermore to ask what kind of political ecology is being revealed or mobilised in such cultural work?

The *Vacant Lots* project was conceived primarily as a live interventionist project in the urban spaces of Belo Horizonte and Fortaleza working 'on the ground' with a range of social actors, however it is possible to see how the material environments themselves had a role to play in the agential effects that resulted from these cultural actions. The activities and events initiated by the project were given local media attention and the project's participants also created forms of online documentation and web-based discussion forums to widen the potential of the project to facilitate forms of public action and discourse. Documentation of the *Vacant Lots* and *Kits Ambulante* projects have been presented in a number of exhibitions across Brazil that have sought to situate their practice within the particular visual and architectural culture of the region.[77]

---

[77] Their collaborative works have featured in a number of national exhibitions and biennales including Ambulantes em Espaços Vagos (2009/10) at Centro Cultural Banco, Nordeste, Fortaleza and Centro Municipal de Arte Hélio Oiticica, Rio de Janiero and Itinerários, Itinerâncias, 32ª edição do Panorama da Arte Brasileira (2010) Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo

The works of the Ambulante Construções Group emerge from a particular cultural and aesthetic heritage and reflect the lasting legacy of the 'social turn' taken by artists in Brazil in the sixties and seventies, evident in the work of Hélio Oiticica, Lygia Clark, Artur Barrio, Antonio Manuel and Cildo Meireles. Formulated on a new relationship between artist and participant the range of works by this disparate group of artists, sought to develop a utopian project for art where it might be positioned in such a way as to transform socio-ethical realities. The establishment of new modes of artistic production and the question of how they might effectively critique, or circulate in, social space also reflects the wider developments occurring in Latin American art in the post-war period. In Brazil in particular the harsh political realities of the sixties and seventies produced a distinctive articulation of artistic practice that issued a legacy of aesthetic forms and processes that were either derived from, sited within, or later 'made from' the material of socio-spatial urban realities.

In her analysis of the intersections that took place between experimental artistic production and the repressive political policies of Brazil during the this period Claudia Calirman identifies the emergence of a 'hybrid art' that transgressed media and 'departed significantly from the milieu of (international) conceptual art' (2012: p.149). To her analysis should be added that such hybridity also developed as a result of a process of 'spatialisation' evident in certain examples of work from this group.[78] Hélio Oiticica's now seminal installation *Tropicália, Penetrables PN2 'Purity is and Myth'* and *PH3 'Imagetical'* (1967-77) exemplifies the distinctive variant of conceptual art to emerge in Brazil during this period and signals the move by artists towards an expansion of aesthetic practice beyond the parameters of the artistic sphere and into the socio-political field.

In *Tropicália* (1967-77) a work that consists of a constructed environment with two adjacent architectural forms Oiticica mobilizes a 'signifier of the social' through the articulation of the favela as its principle visual and spatial reference. Employing materials and cultural artefacts from the

---

[78] This 'spatialisation' could be linked with the twin impulses by artists during the period to 'take to the streets' and establish an 'aesthetics of the margins' (Calirman 2012: p.93-94). The site-specific 'situations' of Artur Barrio in public parks and spaces , Cildo Merele's 'insertions into ideological circuits' of public communication systems and the ephemeral urban interventions of Antonio Manuel all contributed to such a collective impulse and all reflect the engagement of artistic practice with spatial relations and conditions.

inhabitants of improvised urban dwellings he 'fluidly danced from the labyrinthine slums of Rio to the city's asphalt, navigating between high and low… from experiments with the international avant-garde to Brazilian popular culture' (Calirman 2012: p.57). The installation opens up a sensorial space that seems to proffer a transformative potential for spatial experience, perhaps foregrounding the potential creative energy of improvisational or unregulated spaces for the urban subject. This transformative potential though is held in tension with the notion of the favela as an 'undisciplined' space and the extent to which its policed outline imposes a strict segregation of it from the rest of the city, a segregation that defines the edges of urban social integration and social agency.

For Zizek (2011) the favela typifies the often illegible self-organised spaces leftover in an increasingly 'exclusive' city. Drawing on the Deleuzian notion of the city as a space of 'disjunctive inclusion' (184) he suggests that the contemporary city '*has to include* places whose existence is not part of its "ideal-ego", which are *disjoined* from its idealized image of itself' (Zizek 2011: p.271). His observations acknowledge that 'the paradigmatic (but by far not the only) such places are slums ("favelas" in Brazil), places of spatial deregulation and chaotic mixture, of architectural "tinkering/*bricolage*" with ready-made materials' (Zizek p.271). The favela is one of a number of disjoined spaces that according to Zizek form one of three strata of socio-spatial condition and relation, they exist alongside the 'mostly invisible domain of "ordinary" architecture" and the utopian spaces of immaterial labour, such as the museum and other cultural institutions (2011: p.271). As such urban 'leftovers' like the favela exist at a significant distance from sites of cultural production in terms of their socio-spatial composition and their meanings.

Reflecting the significant urban growth experienced in Rio de Janiero and other cities in Brazil at the time the meanings and the materials of the favela were appropriated by artists who sought to close this distance. As such *Tropicalia* stands as a clear example of this strategy as well as representing a paradigm shift in contemporary artistic practice, constituting a significant move towards the 'model of the artist as instigator of ideas' and a more radical mode of audience participation (Calirman

2012: p.148). The effect of such a work was the gradual relocation of the production and dissemination of art from the studio and gallery into the novel territories of urban space, a strategy that is significantly expanded in recent projects like those of the Ambulante Construções Group. [79]

However on another level the legacy of such works can also be measured in terms of how they continue to figure in questions of how contemporary global networks of artistic production, seen in the context of their growing imbrication with urban networks, might articulate a particular political agenda or fabricate a unique democratic space. As such they ask us to reflect on the continuing desire within aesthetic production to actualize art as a unique form of socio-political praxis that is able to do more than simply re-iterate the social and political realities in which it is embedded. This is often a task that is made all the more difficult in the context of the easy recuperation of spatially orientated cultural work into cultural commodities, processes of urban gentrification or mainstream political programs.

Transforming art or the 'aesthetic regime' into a form of social or political praxis is a move that for Ranciere risks eroding the condition of art as a political effect of its critical distantiation (2004: p.84). Asserting a role for art 'against the logic of consensus' understood as the 'reconfiguration of the visibility of the common' (Ranciere 2003), he locates the politics of aesthetics 'between aesthetic separation and artistic indistinction' (2007: p.464). In so doing Ranciere situates art as a 'separation of a sphere of experience', that 'goes along with the loss of any determined criterion of difference between what belongs to art and what belongs to non-artistic life' (2007: p.464).

The task of opening art into the realms of life opens up a tension between the notion of an autonomous art and an art of social engagement, and underscores an uncertainty about the

---

[79] This strategy is echoed in the work of Morar de Outras Manieras (MOM – Living in Other Ways) an architectural research group formed in 2004 also from Belo Horizonte, whose members include Silke Ana Paula Baltazar, Ronaldo Macedo, Denise Morado, Rodrigo Marcandier and Sulamita Lino.). MOM set out to deliberately subvert the orthodox role of architectural design by bypassing the object or architecture and by foregrounding spatial processes and other spatial actors in their projects. Drawing on the informal production of space characteristic of the dwelling spaces of Brazilian favelas and the de-habituating devices of artist Lygia Clark MOM seek to re-orientate the task of architecture. The group's initiatives locate the architectural impulse along the axis of a 'transformation of space by human work' by a threefold process of critique, mediation and the production of concrete or abstract spatial 'interfaces' (MOM (Morar de Outras Manieras) 2008: p.9).

differing operations of art and politics. Ranciere's discussion of the 'politics of aesthetics' (2006) reminds us that simply opposing such positions is too simplistic. His analysis can be read as an attempt to negotiate the claims that aesthetic production can be mobilized to 'raise consciousness' of capitalist dominance and fulfill the utopian goal of transforming the viewer into a 'conscious agent' in the wider world (Ranciere 2006: p.83). At the heart of this problem is the question of whether aesthetics can hope to <u>do</u> politics without to risk of no longer <u>doing</u> aesthetics effacing its own status as 'resistant form' (Ranciere 2004: p.86).

Rancière's answer to this paradox is to propose a 'third' way that is 'the politics founded on a game of exchanges and displacements between the world of art and non-art', this conception of a way through the tension between art and politics plays on the polyphonic potential of the aesthetic faculty, to 'speak' in multiple ways and negotiate new territories of enunciation (Ranciere 2004: p.86). In Ranciere's terms 'this negotiation must keep something of the tension that pushes aesthetic experience toward the reconfiguration of collective life and something of the tension that withdraws the power of aesthetic sensibility from the other spheres of experience' (2003). Ranciere reads such a negotiation extensively through the artistic mode of collage, though this concept clearly has some form of alliance with the proliferation of spatially or ecologically orientated practices that employ the inclusion of strategies of composing assemblages of material and processes that shift back and forth between art and non-art fields.

Rancière asks whether it is a reflection of the failure of the mechanisms of mainstream political activity that have led to 'a substitutive political function to the mini-demonstrations of artists' and the desire to fulfill a political role in repairing the social bonds of fragmented contemporary urban communities (2004: p.92). Whether such 'substitutions' can hope to enact a reconstruction of political spaces proper is perhaps down to how artistic production is able to augment its diffusion into life without relinquishing something of itself as art. One way to think of this is how artistic production might be seen to re-compose political space rather than simply reproducing it, or worse

simply constructing a parody of it. In order to do this art must maintain a level of 'undecidability' between itself and life and itself and other sense experience, as Ranciere puts it: 'It must borrow from the zones of indistinction of art and life the connections that provoke political intelligibility. And it must borrow from the separateness of art works the sense of sensory foreignness that enhances political energies. Political art must be some sort of collage of the opposites' (Ranciere 2003).

It is productive to examine to what extent critical spatial practice, as a distinct form of aesthetic praxis, under Ranciere's terms works through particular modes of 'undecidability', operating *in* and *on* the dynamics of urban spatialities, transgressing the territorial order of art and architectural cultures and troubling the boundaries of their respective formal and conceptual enterprises. Ranciere himself (2003, 2009) calls upon the ambiguities of spatial interventions to elucidate the problem of political art. Citing the long term project *Je & Nous* (I & Us) (2003-6), a collaboration between Parisian art collective Campement Urbain and residents of the Sevran-Beaudottes district in Northern Paris. [80] This project aimed to produce a collectively constituted and managed narrative of 'public space' produced through the tensions of two historically antagonistic communities. Ranciere's investment in such a work is in how it might divulge the specificity of a 'politics of aesthetics'.   For him the *Je & Nous* (I & Us) (2003-6) project is a salient reminder that 'Art is not political owing to the messages and feelings that it conveys on the state of social and political issues. Nor is it political owing to the way it represents social structures, conflicts or identities. It is political by virtue of the very distance that it takes with respect to those functions' (Ranciere 2003). The political dimension of such work derives from its potential to create a political space that reframes or reconfigures the practices and the modes of thinking and feeling 'being in common'. In this sense the 'undecidability' of critical spatial practices is when they are put to work on everyday social

---

[80] The group are composed of artists Sylvie Blocher, François Daune, and Regis Biecher, architect/urban planner Josette Faidit and sociologist Ursula Kurz.

praxis, the interactions between urban subjects and environments and the common worlds that they are able to formulate.

Though it is instructive to trace how the works of the Ambulante Construções Group share a particular cultural heritage and a specific conceptual program formulated by the Latin American avant-garde, situating such works in relation to the emergence of critical spatial practice in a wider geographical context is productive in terms of assessing how it is able to do more than simply re-iterate the social and political realities. Projects like *Vacant Lots* (2004-8) should be read in terms of how a widening range of examples of spatial practice engage with the problems of transforming spatial relations and conditions and seeking the means by which political realities might be reconfigured.

As such critical spatial practice appears to be a fairly atomized set of initiatives and processes that does not share a single point of origin in national or regional terms. However what is common to many is how they work from the specificities of a singular geographical location to create novel constituencies of actors and platforms of 'public' assembly. Close points of comparison could be made between the Ambulante Construções Group and other contemporary spatial practitioners in Europe and elsewhere, who have sought to develop a form of praxis that operates at the edges of the formal and conceptual enterprises of art and architecture to transgress into a wider ecological territory.[81]

Urban Governance, the Everyday and 'Public Life'

From the range of projects created by Ganz and Silva, *Vacant Lots* (2004-8) and *Ambulant Kits* (2009-11) in particular have each been disseminated in the wider context of a number of international curatorial projects and forums. Both have been situated under the umbrella of expansive research

---

[81] some key examples in this respect would be the initiatives set up by the Slovenian artist/architect Apolonija Šušteršič, the Argentinian artist collective Ala Plástica, the Istanbul artist group Oda Projesi, the Pulska Grupa based in Pula, Croatia, as well as the collaborative actions of Stalker/Osservatorio Nomade, a collective based in Rome and the widely cited project Park Fiction that began in Hamburg, Germany in 1994.

programs exploring how art and architectural cultures are converging on the implications of the fluidity and temporalities of contemporary urban morphology and the dynamics of urban ecologies. In recent years, both within the confines of cultural institutions and outside, through temporary appropriations of public space, the exhibition space staged as a research laboratory has become a cultural and pedagogical device through which debates on contemporary urbanity are being mounted. In the context of this expanded pedagogical field critical spatial practice should not therefore be thought of as a discrete set of aesthetic works rather it exists as an example of a post-studio phenomenon that operates across the nodal points of a global network to develop a plurality of urban actions, practices, research initiatives, public projects and dissemination devices.[82]

The curatorial project *Devir Menor: Arquitecturas y Prácticas Espaciales Críticas en Iberoamérica (2012)* (Becoming Minor: On Architecture and Emerging Spatial Projects in Ibero-America) is a recent example of this phenomenon and one that located the Vacant Lots project within the wider field of contemporary spatial practice. This project and exhibition developed for the Guimarães 2012 ECOC (European City of Culture) Cultural Programme in Art and Architecture formed part of one of four cycles in the programme entitled *Means of Production*, which also included an exhibition of the work of Archigram and the commissioning of site-specific works made for the municipality of Guimarães by international artists.

The *Vacant Lots* project featured as a key case study for Devir Menor, and documentation of the network of actions across Belo Horizonte was included alongside 21 other case studies presented in the form of a collection of texts, maps, photographs and films for the exhibition (see Fig.24). Devir Menor, a collaboration between Inês Moreira and Susana Caló, was an attempt to establish a 'hybrid

---

[82] Detailed surveys and analyses of the networked operations of contemporary artistic and spatial cultures can be found in Mörtenböck, Peter and Mooshammer, Helge (2008) *Networked Cultures: Parallel Architectures and the Politics of Space* Rotterdam: NAi Publishers and Scholette, Gregory (2011) *Dark Matter: Art and the Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture* London: Pluto Press. For more on the influence of the network paradigm on cultural production see Bang Larsen, Lars (forthcoming 2014) *Networks: Documents in Contemporary Art* Cambridge, MA. and London: Whitechapel Art Gallery and MIT Press

Figure 24. *Devir Menor: (Becoming Minor: On Architecture and Emerging Spatial Projects in Ibero-America)* Guimarães 2012. Image (centre) shows the presentation of photographic and textual documentation of Lotes Vagos (Vacant Lots) (2004). The organisation and layout of the exhibition was intended to create a dialogue between the diverse forms of urban research and project that had been gathered together.

research between architecture, critical theory and material practice' that sought to examine the working processes of contemporary critical spatial practice that would culminate in a series of public events and exposition of its findings (Moreira and Caló 2012).[83] Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's concept of Kafka's 'minor literature' ([1975] 1986) the project focused on examples of spatial practice that appear to articulate ways of 'speaking' or 'practicing space' within the context of more dominant and thus subordinating language, generating non-normative or transformative enunciations of space.[84] Honing in on forms of praxis where a longer term contextually specific engagement with urban space 'acquires a proximity to everyday life and a processual nature' this research exercise sought to examine what occurs when 'political, economic, social and ecological factors intersect the projectual development' (Moreira and Caló 2012).

By focusing attention on the proximity of architectural and spatial practice to quotidian or cultural practices and the intersecting forces that shape urban realities curatorial projects like Devir Menor raise important questions about the extent to which 'the modalities of relation with the context change the project itself' that in turn expose the agential contingencies on which such practices are built (Moreira and Caló 2012). In the case of Vacant Lots these 'modalities of relation' were to all intents and purposes the principal site of intervention for the work, as what this project navigated was the shifting tensions found between forces that maintain the legality of private ownership those that make claims for public use. Crucially, from a more eco-logical perspective, Vacant Lots is also an instructive exercise in ascertaining what actors participate in or mediate processes of urban resistance and the politics of urban spatialities. What curatorial projects like Devir Menor attempt to map is the possible trajectories through which conventional alignments between urban subjects and environments might be reconfigured or re-routed to produce unexpected agential sequences and other ways of envisioning how and by whom urban space might be administered.

---

[83] For an extended discussion of this concept see the introduction to the project in Moreira, Inês (2013) *Devir Menor: Arquitecturas y Prácticas Espaciales Críticas en Iberoamérica* Guimarães: Fundação Cidade de Guimarães.
[84] In this way it sought to identify how spatial incursions operate in a minoritarian position, following Deleuze and Guattari's conception of the 'minor' as possessing both a political nature and collective enunciative value

This re-evaluation of the role and significance of spontaneous processes of self-organisation and self-regulation to determine the forms of governance that emerge in urban spatialities is mirrored in international research programs such as *Urban_Trans_Formation* (2007), the 2nd Holcim Foundation Forum held at the Tongji University of Shanghai, China.[85] Constituted as a multi-faceted debate platform tendering a range of themes and site-based mobile workshops on contemporary urbanism, *Urban_Trans_Formation* facilitated interdisciplinary exchanges around issues of the governance and sustainability of transitioning urban morphologies. Set within this larger research umbrella The *Vacant Lots* project contributed to an exploration of evolving forms of urban Informality and self-regulation. The research strand *Informal Urbanism: Between Sanctioned and Shadow Orders* centred on a reflection of the ways in which current 'renditions of urban governance' (Holcim Foundation 2007)[86] continue to operate from a hierarchical perspective often resulting in the neglect or effacement of bottom-up or self-organised approaches.

The desire amongst those that represent architectural culture to redress this imbalance suggests that there is an increasing recognition of the potential vitality of other forms of urban creativity to be found in self-organised initiatives, and the informal and unsanctioned forms of urban experiment like those demonstrated in *Vacant Lots*. Such a recognition acknowledges that urban morphological changes are determined by the tensions that exist between regulatory and de-regulatory impulses in late capitalist politics as much as they are by urban planning and architectural design. Intrinsically linked to the forces that produce these tensions are the patterns of agency exercised by and between different and sometimes conflicting urban actors and the ways in which settlements are reached.

In this way urban governance might be thought of something that comes about through fluid interactions rather than something always imposed from above. In other words urban governance

---

[85] The Holcim Foundation for Sustainable Construction is a non-profit organisation established in 2003. Its sole sponsor is Zurich based construction materials company Holcim Ltd. The Foundation works to promote, develop and reward strategies and methods for sustainable futures.

[86] See http://www.holcimfoundation.org/Forum/shanghai-2007/Workshops/informal-urbanism-between-sanctioned-and-shadow-orders For more on the themes and findings of *Urban_Trans_Formation* see Ruby, Ilka and Andreas (eds.) (2008) Urban Transformation Berlin: Ruby Press

can be arrived at, or constituted through emergent processes of negotiation and self-regulation. Under such a conception critical spatial practice clearly has a potential role to play in fostering other kinds of space for urban actors to assemble and construct experimental forms of 'governance'. Furthermore understood in this way it is possible to see how the operations of spatial practice constantly intersect with systems of urban governance as it is perpetually tested and transformed. The idea that heterogeneous actors assemble with one another in innumerably convoluted concatenations supports the view that urban governance must be constantly re-constituted, as any ability to 'steer' (taken from the greek root of the word govern 'kubernan') is the product of the fluctuating push and pull of a spectrum of agential forces and the seemingly irresolvable impulses to police and liberate space.

Urban governance is thus the product of complex and often convoluted alignments between different actors, the outward appearance of stability of the social fabric and the physical topography of contemporary cities is woven from the shifting terrain of 'parallel forms of social alliance, some legal and established, others outside the sway of official purview' (Holcim Foundation 2007). For designers of urban spaces and for policy makers alike this view of urban governance and the dynamics of agency at work in urban spatialities demands a more 'bifurcated sensibility attuned to a balance between official control and participatory agency' (Holcim Foundation 2007). Top down governance or dominant patterns of agency are not instrumentalised without some level of 'filtration' as they intersect with other forces and agents, and conversely bottom-up self-regulatory initiatives that might appear to operate autonomously are not free from agential 'interference' from external sources.

What projects like *Vacant Lots* (2004-8) render visible through their particular succession of actions is this bifurcated mode of agency at work in systems/spaces of urban governance, as Ganz suggests 'a procedural urbanism implies participation, a kind of popular planning where antagonisms are necessary to construct democracy' (Ganz 2013: interview conducted by author). Any capacity to act

on/in such systems/spaces is perhaps in most part due to the clear overlap between critical spatial practice and the everyday practices of spatial occupation that occur in our cities on a daily basis.

Such overlaps have in recent years become the specific subject of investigation for a number of academic publications, Franck and Stevens (2006), Haydn and Temel (2006), Hou (2010) and Park (2005). *Vacant Lots* (2004-8) like Ganz and Silva's other project *Kits Ambulante* (2009-11) were originally conceived of as 'tools' for urban dwellers to temporarily transform their immediate material (and social) environment, especially those spaces in the city (whether public or private) that maintain no fixed identity. In the case of *Kits Ambulante* the size and portability of these 'tools' ensure that their potential user's movement is not inhibited, at the same time such qualities add to their viability as hawkable 'products' to be sold on street corners. As such these 'mobile devises' are somewhat ill-defined objects existing somewhere between cultural and quotidian use value embodying the intersecting territory that spatial practice often occupies.

Perhaps for this reason *Vacant Lots* and *Kits Ambulante* featured as a local satellite project operating in dialogue with the archive of everyday urban practices featured in the touring exhibition *Post-It City: Ciudades Ocasionales* at the Centro Cultural de Sao Paolo, Sao Paulo, Brazil. *Post-It City: Ciudades Ocasionales (Occasional Urbanities)* initiated in 2008 was a large scale international research network developed by curator Marti Pelan to construct an archive of case studies on temporary urban occupation presented at touring exhibitions and public events in seven international venues.[87] The project's global scope encompassed 78 urban case studies carried out by urban research groups, art institutions and other cultural agents across 19 cities.

Post-It City was an attempt to reframe the significance of small scale urban informality and the perpetual reconfiguration of public spaces characterised in unsanctioned occupations of space at street level. It concentrated on quotidian practices of any type, from commercial enterprise and

---

[87] Post-it City was originally hosted by the Centre de Cultural Contemporania, Barcelona (2008) it went on to be hosted at Lille3000, Lille (2009), MAC, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Santiago de Chile, Chile (2009), Centro Cultural de Sao Paolo, Sao Paulo, Brasil (2009), Argentina La Prensa, Buenos Aires (2010), Uruguay Espacio de Arte Contemporáneo, Montevideo (2010) and Museo de Cadiz, Cadiz (2011)

recreational use, to the establishment of micro-industries and urban farming. The phenomenon of the 'post-it city' on which the project was framed refers to the way in which according to Giovanni LaVarra contemporary urban formations retain a 'functional apparatus… which is involved in the dynamics of public life outside conventional channels' (2001 cited in Peran 2008: p.197). Examining the exact nature of this 'apparatus' is thus a way of opening to view a diversity of urban practices that fall outside of official sanctioned behaviours and forms of habitation. Some of which are practices based on improvised and 'low-profile' strategies of survival employed by marginal social groups, some of which that may be considered as 'practices of dissent' or forms of resistance (LaVarra 2001 cited in Peran 2008: p.199). In both cases to greater or lesser degrees they offer an insight into the diversity and significance of informal and marginal patterns of 'public life'.

The network of case studies brought together by this urban research laboratory produces a collage of contrasting utility and temporality in urban space, according to the project's initiators such a research structure allows for 'readings of different post-it situations as models of the most elementary political action: the free development of experience in the context of the "polis" (Peran ca.2008). Post-it phenomenon are thus seen as improvisational actions that call into question the idea of a homogeneous model of public life and that challenge the notion that urban governance must be deferred to state agencies or private interests.

The threads that run through these curatorial projects can often be traced to the propinquity found between quotidian urban practices and critical spatial practice, both seem to address albeit from different trajectories 'the recovery of the notion of a utility of public space that allows recognition of the citizen's role beyond the limits of the role of consumer' (Peran ca.2008). The kind of spatial politics that both point to is one that highlights how public space, though diminishing, is still a vital forum within which the concept and exercise of governance is determined and a wider public polity might be staged. Temporary occupations, the regularity of their occurrence and the diversity of

their means remind us of the failure of dominant forces, whether municipal or private in character, to comprehensively unify or police urban temporality and space.

The extent to which attempts to homogenise and control urban space are able to succeed is precisely what such expressions of spontaneous 'public life' probe. They are, we might say, the litmus test of the existence of a healthy and participative form of urban governance. But between what LaVarra has termed 'strategies of survival' and 'practices of dissent' is the measure of what resistant or agential potential can emerge from the overlooked practices of everyday life. In fact the scale with which this measurement is made is not as differentiated as it might first appear, as everyday 'strategies of survival' often operate at the limits of functionality. Requiring both temporal and spatial footholds in an already contested urban space such strategies routinely produce their own 'excess', an expressive function tendered from the claims or meanings they issue (for example visibility or dignity). Under these terms such everyday strategies belie more than just a functional drive for individual or collective existence. The affinity between spatial practice and these often tenuous and transient quotidian urban practices is perhaps most readily found in this expressive function, this capacity to speak or act a 'thinking otherwise' as a kind of everyday polity. It is this creative and resistant potential that spills over from the quotidian that critical spatial practice often attempts to mine and re-direct.

This everyday practice of subversion or what might be termed a 'politics of the small act' recalls de Certeau's (1998) proposition of the potential of everyday 'tactics' used by the individual citizen to generate micro-modulations in the transfers of power from the dominant order. The individual subject in this context is seen as holding the potential to re-interpret or modify such transfers through their everyday patterns of lived experience, the ethical relationships they form and through the more overt 'tactics' of creative appropriation or misuse of instruments of power. Whilst this expressive and resistant potential of the everyday might support notions of a 'bifurcated mode of agency' and the existence of active 'practices of dissent' we should be cautious in overplaying the

role of micro acts at the level of the individual in having lasting effects on collective identities and the composition of dominant agencies. As Lois McNay (1996) has argued, elevating the agency of the individual subject modelled on de Certeau's micro revolutions of small acts runs the risk of misguidedly over estimating or even fetishizing the agential capacity of everyday tactics of resistance as a way of evading or even erasing the very significant limitations and attenuations of a structural agential regime.

Though we should recognise that there are problems with over-emphasising the potential agency of everyday practices it is also worth reminding ourselves that everyday urban space is too vast, too fragmented and too unstable for the social structures and the forms of praxis it contains to be universally controlled and instrumentalised by dominant forces. In this context the operations of critical spatial practice do not constitute a re-staging of individual micro resistances on a collective level instead it's operations reveal, re-direct and re-codify the creative energies already present in everyday urban existence to create new constituencies of urban life. Recalling Ranciere's notion of 'undecidability' (2003) discussed earlier, we might say that the expressive dimension of such cultural work derives from its potential to maintain an in-distinction, between itself and life, and itself and other sense experience. Critical spatial practice thus operates as a means of creating political spaces or spaces 'for the political' to emerge by reformulating existent practices and modes of thinking and feeling, 'being in common'. In other words new constituencies are drawn together from an array of existent heterogeneous components and agencies, to be held in tension with one another through processes that re-configure or re-compose their capacity to form common worlds.

In the case of *Vacant Lots* (2004-8) and *Kits Ambulante* (2009-11) Ganz and Silva devised these projects to act as platforms for urban action that sought to place the divisions between public and private under scrutiny as well as testing the mechanisms and mediating objects around which urban subjectivities can gather. Working at the level of fostering environments for alternative urban subjectivities to emerge, these two project platforms can also be seen to reveal and contest existing

models of urban governance through the initiation of self-organised enterprise. Linking these urban actions is a desire to initiate forms of assembly that act as 'attractors' for other actors and other actions to gather and proliferate. In this sense spatial practice of this sort might best be described as the progenitor of chains of action, some of which have the potential to gather momentum, others of which may stutter, stall or come to an abrupt end. Such a mode of practice seems to, on one hand yield to the unpredictability of and attenuated nature of human agency, whilst on the other summon the vitality found in the fraternisation of urban subjects and environments as a source of potential change and agency. Both of these tendencies indicate that changes in the ways in which we express ourselves as urban subjects and changes in the ways in which we invoke new forms of commonality between urban subjects have a distinctly spatial aspect. On a very basic level at least the process of change or agencing begins by claiming a space in which new constituencies might cohere.

Finding Space(s) for Thinking and Acting 'Being in Common'

Claiming a space for agencing to begin raises the question of what kinds of space make it possible for such constituencies to cohere? Evoking the term 'paisagem banal' (ordinary landscape) to describe the quotidian and urban context of their chosen actions Ganz (2009: p.88) recalls earlier forays taken by artists into unremarkable and indeterminate urban spaces invoking the transformative potential that such spaces appear to exhibit. Citing an early public action by a group of Dadaists, entitled *The Visit* (1921) a temporary urban occupation that took place in the grounds of Saint Julien le Pauvre, Paris, Ganz locates the notion of the banal within a critique of modernity and the rejection of the possibility of a unified and utopian city. The banal space is not a site that elicits transformative potential through spectacle or monument but through its capacity to host new forms of occupation or novel modes of living.

Banal space or seemingly vacant space is therefore perceived as being less marked by the patterns and relations of hegemonic space and thus it acts as a kind of impure or un-realised urban commons,

in the same way as discussed in the previous chapter. Urban natures can prior to any efforts to cultivate or enculturate them by means of institutionalizing them as 'public' gardens or 'nature' reserves, be thought of as banal or vacant and unmarked in this way. Ganz also cites Alan Sonfist's one man urban re-forestation project *Time Landscape* (1965) a project that made use of a vacant lot, in Manhattan, New York to deliberately and rather paradoxically 'cultivate nature'.

Situating the works of the Ambulante Construções Group in this way highlights the twin aspect of artistic interventions in the urban context. On an operative level such actions are caught in a tension between the poetic and the pragmatic, the quotidian and the utopian. This twin aspect is present in what Kelly Baum terms 'the interruptive' (2010: p.20), one of four strands of contemporary artistic engagement with space that she traces. In her attempt to formalize a typology of spatial techniques this particular strategy serves as a means 'to interrupt the operations of power, both symbolically and practically' (Baum 2010: p.28). Elsewhere Claire Doherty has suggested that 'artists have become just as interested in the points at which a single site fractures, through the production or invocation of what Foucault termed 'heterotopias', as they have in the process of interaction with a pre-defined location' (2009: p.15). What such engagements with, and insertions of aesthetic praxis into, the 'ordinary landscape' of the city reveal is the extent to which spatial anomalies and inconsistencies within the urban matrix, those illegible, incongruous or non-conformist spaces, have come to represent the ground on which utopic ideals and informal programs of micro-political change might be built. Alongside this though we must also recognise the extent to which an implicit creativity of quotidian practices (and spaces) have transformed aesthetic praxis, especially in the particular manifestation of critical spatial practice under discussion here.

What this artistic preoccupation with such spaces urges us to consider is what the nature of these 'ordinary landscapes' within the city are? And whether it is possible to designate such spaces with a singular identity? Furthermore it provokes the question of how it is that certain zones within urban spatialities can come to harbour such transformative potential where others do not? As an answer

to this the term 'ordinary landscape' seems a little imprecise, it seems too much to engender a sense of the generic, uniform or overlooked. This inclination of the term could therefore limit our understanding of such spaces as just another of the constitutive features of the modern city's homogenous face. On the contrary it seems that the 'ordinary' landscapes occupied in the *Vacant Lots* project represent more the spatial anomalies that persist when the urban scape is submitted to a dominant territorial dynamics. Another way of thinking through such spaces then is to think of them as being 'ordinary' in the way in which they are constructed rather than their appearance. Put another way these spaces are formed from the banal: the 'bit by bit', gradual accumulation of barely visible, inconsequential characteristics and features inscribed by the routines of everyday material life, rather than as a result of conforming to an identity that has been ascribed or shaped by a dominant socio-spatial settlement.[88]

In this sense then these 'ordinary' spaces exist more as void spaces in the urban matrix standing in opposition to the colonizing rationale of an ordered spatial regime. Spaces that have acquired a strange duality poised between worthlessness and value, redundancy and potential. As such they are the inversion of homogeneity and uniformity. Such void spaces or the 'public holes' in urban space like those observed by Map Office in their publishing project *Mapping HK* (2000) maintain a vital potential for thinking and actuating space 'otherwise', at the very least they 'create an opportunity to cut the hyper-density with emptiness or greenery' (Gutierrez and Portefaix 2000 p.114).[89] Ganz's invocation of the term 'ordinary landscape' to refer more specifically to vacant lots locates the 'ordinary' in this void, these in-amongst or in-between spaces that exist alongside those that we might describe as being functionally over-determined. Whether void, vacant or functionless, what such ordinary spaces testify too is that it is possible to envision an 'un-designed' urbanity, an environment that 'falls fallow' of any clearly predetermined use, function or identity. According to

[88] This notion of being 'formed from the banal' draws on the etymology of the term 'banal. In old French the term 'banel' was a word used to refer to any commonplace object or space that was deemed or authorised to be 'open to all' in a particular feudal jurisdiction (e.g. communal mills and ovens etc.)

[89] Mapping HK (Hong Kong) (2000) is a multi-perspectival cartographic experiment or prototype conducted by Map Office (artist and architects Laurent Gutierrez and Valérie Portefaix), presented at the 7th Venice Architectural Biennale (2000). This research based project devised a series of interrelated vectors through which local and global forces could be observed simultaneously in urban phenomena, to produce photographs, images, and texts that investigated the complex territorial dynamics of Hong Kong.

Figure 25. *Ambulante Construções Group – Lotes Vagos (Vacant Lots) (2004). Typical vacant lots, Belo Horizonte.* Many of the empty lots or 'fallow' spaces found in the city were distinctly socio-natural in their physical character without any clearly prescribed function or identity.

Ganz designed or sanctioned versions of urbanity produce cities that are 'clean, orderly and equal', a condition that 'diminishes the ability to generate surprise or provide fortuitous encounters with dust, disorder or the grass that sprouts unduly from a hole in the sidewalk' (Ganz 2008: p.72). What is particularly interesting in the case of the *Vacant Lots* project is how many of the fallow spaces that featured in the series of actions had been reclaimed by urban natures, ecological processes clearly contribute to the spatial characteristics of each lot, just as they had a tangible influence on the actions themselves (see Fig. 25). Such void spaces, spaces with no designation other than being 'provisional' are however easily romanticized as spaces of resistant potential, and it would be false to assume that such spaces are inherently emancipatory. It is clear that such spaces can in fact become fertile sites for a range of practices including, criminality, informal leisure and economic improvisation.

However it is precisely this potential for un-prescribed and non-normative use that such spaces embody and propagate that makes them the sites for collective projections of alternative urban visions and futures, and for spatial practitioners, the spatial coordinates round which new constituencies of actors might be assembled. Ganz and Silva's preoccupation with the ubiquitous vacant lot seems focused around this lack of proscription and condition of provisionality and the potential this arouses, reflecting on this Ganz asked 'could temporarily occupied vacant lots be the micro-scale experience of another city, invented from voids, to create new spaces and ways of living? (Ganz 2009: p.86).

This affiliation between the transformative potential that resides in indeterminate spaces and forms of cultural production that 'plug into', diffract or complicate this potential is well documented in recent critical writing in spatial culture. One particularly productive source has been the notion of 'terrain vague', a term employed by architect Ignasi de Sola-Morales (1995) to describe the condition of uncertainty found in marginal, periphery or simply vacant spaces scattered throughout the modern city. Read as a condition of a 'portion' of urbanity with no clear design and no set of

predetermined social functions, the concept of 'terrain vague' pinpoints an inherent duality to be found in such spaces. It points to an existence *within* the confines of the ordered and homogenous city whilst underlining the fact that its formation somehow occurs outside or at its 'margins'. The disorderly presence (and potential) of terrain vague within the wider confines of the city originates from this duality, from its condition of estrangement.

Exuding this state of non-conformity means that it somehow escapes from, slips out of reach of, the scopic and physical prosthesis of dominant socio-spatial regimes to become 'both the physical expression of our fear and insecurity and our expectation of the other, the alternative, the utopian, the future' (de Sola Morales 1995 cited in Almy 2007: p.111). The terrain vague issues a particular problem for architecture as it speaks of the possibility of an emergent urbanity without the need for an overarching plan, indifferent to the assumed aesthetic and social benefits of design. The intervention of programmatic architectural design in such spaces is an erasure of this emergent urbanity and an overwriting of one spatial program over another. For de Sola Morales (1995) this desire for legibility and control exposes the colonial nature of top down urban planning in which architecture is implicated as blind instrument of power. In this context he claims architecture is an imposition of form and order upon space or 'the introduction into strange space of the elements of identity necessary to make it recognizable, identical, universal' (de Sola Morales 1995 cited in Almy 2007: p.112). Taking this point further he contends that 'when architecture and urban design project their desire onto a vacant space, a terrain vague, they seem incapable of doing anything other than introducing violent transformations, changing estrangement into citizenship' (de Sola Morales 1995 cited in Almy 2007: p.112). Such a claim raises serious questions about the agency of urban design and forces us to consider the political implications of seeking to resist the recuperation of such spaces into a unified and disciplined urban landscape.

Terrain vague is not then a space on which we can model or design forms of urban resistance, the notion that it can become a tool or a field that can be regenerated at a specific time or location is

clearly untenable. The principle contribution of such a conception of space is the idea that there are 'other' spaces with other kinds of dynamics that 'rub along' with dominant socio-spatial alignments. An emergent form of urbanity is one that is not sanctioned and thus possesses the capacity to speak of different urban futures and different urban ecologies.

The notion of terrain vague highlights the lack of any stable identity for urban space and indicates that other forces, energies, dis-orders and agencies can contribute to the production of space. What this of course reflects is the simultaneous co-existence of the opposing dynamics of modernity and post-modernity, on one hand a rational, homogeneous and regulated urban composition, on the other a fragmented, heterogeneous and undisciplined urban network. Terrain vague is one way of describing these unruly zones within an otherwise seemingly well policed urban environment, other conceptions focus more on their emancipatory role.

Another conception is found in what Nicklas Papastergiadis has termed 'para-functional space' (1996, 2006), the 'in-between' spaces he describes resonate with the kinds of 'unruly' ecological assemblages and the 'recombinant ecologies' discussed in the previous chapter. The 'para-functional' are spaces that are abandoned 'in-between', wastelands that accumulate a history of their former uses and resonate with a multiplicity of potential uses, elicit or otherwise. According to Papastergiadis para-functional spaces are those spaces that 'lurk at the edge of activity, or in the passages where activity occurs but the relationship between use and place remains unnamed' (Papastergiadis and Rogers 1996: p.76). Such spaces are not however to be considered as 'empty', no more than they are to be written off as outsider spaces in need of recuperation into a more legible and official city. In this sense para-functional space offers a view of the city normally obscured by official narratives, as Papastergiadis contends they exist as 'zones in which creative, informal and unintended uses overtake officially designated functions' where 'social life is not simply abandoned or wasted; rather it continues in ambiguous and unconventional ways (2002: p.45). Seen from ground level they testify to the distinctive forms of interaction that take place on a routine

basis between urban citizens and their material environment. On closer inspection these 'unruly' zones are just the kinds of spaces where an urban commons is most acutely contested and where emerging 'forms of life' are being improvised and tested.

Whilst these conceptions of potentially emancipatory space share many similarities they all point to the fact that it is not always possible to designate such spaces with a singular identity in terms of their capacity to elicit democratic participation or to produce new forms of commonality. However they each contribute to a close accordance about the potential of the spatial margins to both confer and precipitate other 'forms of life'. These spatial margins are described by Constantin Petcou and Doina Petrescu as potentially 'alterotopical', they are 'other spaces as much as spaces of 'the other', and spaces built and shared 'with others' (2007: p.322). Discussing the practice of Atelier d'architecture autogeree which they co-founded in 2001, Petcou and Petrescu situate their projects 'in cracks and 'inbetweens…spaces that concentrate energy, are contradictory and porous' (2007: p.322). Elaborating on Sennett's 'multi-functional margin of the agora' and Nicholas le-Strat's notion of the 'interstitial reconstruction of the city' they propose the marginal/edge space as a site for alterotopic production (Petcou and Petrescu 2007: p.322 and p.327, note 20).[90] In this liminal space trans-local actors and forces are weaved together in ways that might 'reintroduce 'the political dimension' in everyday space' (Petcou and Petrescu 2007: p.323).

By occupying or inhabiting such 'liminal' spaces, between nature and culture, land and place, public and private, critical spatial practitioners are in effect seeking out points of unpredictable agential energy in a wider ecology of agencing, or what Petcou and Petrescu simply refer to as 'acting spaces' (2007). In the case of *Vacant Lots* (2004-8) Ganz and Silva re-directed the unruly energies of these liminal, vacant plots of land, turning them into testing grounds for experimentation with the stability and fixity of urban spatial configurations and the urban social relations they are capable of producing. Demonstrating an awareness of this interconnected relationship Ganz and Silva

---

[90] For more on their respective discussions see Sennett, Richard (2005) 'Democratic Spaces', in *Hunch* N° 9 Amsterdam: Berlage Institute, and Pascal Nicolas Le-Strat (2007)' Interstitial Multiplicity', in Atelier d'Architecture Autogérée and PEPRAV (eds.) (2007) *Urban Act: a Handbook for Alternative Practice* Paris, pp.314-318

described the enterprise as an attempt to, '…rethink urban territory and the relations that the population may create with these vacant spaces in the city, where activities for leisure, culture, agriculture or other unusual activities might occur' (2005: p.32).

Whilst being drawn to the potential that these vacant lots offered for unregulated and spontaneous communitarian use, the scope of this project clearly acknowledged the shifting temporal, political and economic conditions that govern the production of contemporary urban spaces and urban commons. In particular the attempt to 'make public' urban enclosures involved navigating the systems of control that govern land rights and access, testing the mandate of legal bureaucracy that supports it and the dominance of a market logic within which it is framed. Such critical navigations explore the mechanisms of urban governance and reflect how an urban commons is something that is constantly made and re-made between 'things', as conflicting energies shape its material and virtual boundaries.

As de Angelis has argued 'it is important to emphasize not only that enclosures happen all the time, but also that there is constant commoning' (cited in An Architektur 2010: p.4). In this way both material and immaterial resources are perpetually subject to impending enclosure as free capital expansion involves the colonisation of every facet of life, inversely though, those same resources can be claimed, accessed, and in some cases distributed 'in a way that is different from the modalities of the market' (de Angelis cited in An Architektur 2010: p.4). This is evident in urban space as physical places and temporalities are claimed or appropriated by diverse citizens producing differing forms of 'social life', or where communities cohere around the sharing or building of public realms. However this does not always produce the conditions for a 'healthy' commons.

Such processes of building or sharing a public realm in the interests of all are complicated by the very real tensions that exist between what we perhaps mistakenly assume to be the same; commonality and community. Stavrides (in An Architektur 2010: p.6) has very usefully argued that

communities understood as homogenous entities do not constitute a 'public' or a commonality. Whereas the former defines a potentially detached or closed social group the latter refers to the spaces (physical or virtual) where differing communities or ways of life might meet and interact. The danger of formulating a commons on the former notion is that citizens 'may thus define themselves as commoners by excluding others from their milieu, from their own privileged commons'(Stavrides cited in An Architektur 2010: p.6). Instead Stavrides contends that a healthy commons is one that 'does not focus on similarities...but on the very differences between people that can possibly meet on a purposefully instituted common ground' (cited in An Architektur 2010:p.6).

Echoing this Hardt and Negri describe the metro(polis) as the principle site for our encounter with the 'other', as such it is the site of human organisation and politics, or where 'encounters are organised politically' (2009: p.254). However given the tensions and violence that urban spatialities can embody, both spontaneous and more 'managed' encounters do not by their nature immediately result in enhanced capacities for a social body. The organisation of productive encounters therefore requires an 'openness to alterity' that fosters inter-subjective (and inter-community) relationships and a willingness to work through and transform unpropitious or antagonistic encounters. For Hardt and Negri 'a new production of the common' occurs when joyful encounters are seen to accrue 'different knowledges, different capacities to form cooperatively something new' (2009:p.254). These joyful encounters or formulations of commonality express a necessary reconciliation between subjects or as Sloterdijk would have it, a re-constitution of subjects through the continual practice of isosthenic situations (Sloterdijk 2005: p.950). Both speak of the need to balance the equal power of agents, but both also allude to a constitutional fairness based on the acceptance of the agential endowment of the 'other', an 'other' that in a renewed political ecology would also include encounters with other kinds of (non-human) agents.

'Distributed Democracy' in Ecological Space

Reflecting on *Vacant Lots* (2004-8) Ganz asserts that 'only through cooperation, we can reach a sustainable way of life', but any notion of a sustainable commons also suggests that we need to be prepared to negotiate 'radical changes in the spheres of production (goods and space), distribution and consumption' (2013: interview conducted by author). To this end Ganz states that '*Vacant Lots* promotes another ecology, in a political sphere' (2013: interview conducted bay author). By opening up vacant spaces and forms of bureaucracy to 'public view' the *Vacant Lots* project can be seen as issuing a challenge to the stability and durability of public-private boundaries through actions of temporary 'commoning', something we have already seen in other forms of spatial practice outlined above.[91] In so doing the *Vacant Lots* (2004-8) project acted as a distributed platform onto which new constituencies of 'actors' could be built that proposed, explored and actuated alternative micro-scale urban ecologies or urban futures on land normally designated as private and therefore 'off-limits'. A project like this should therefore be read as a perpetual 'work in progress' taking place in an experimental territory whose contours shift as new forces and agents 'participate' or come into contact with one another. In other words the operations of such forms of cultural production often reveal the conditions of their making, revealing the attenuated nature of agency as it is spun out across intersecting forces and actors. In the specific case of *Vacant Lots* the physical scale of the lots and the specificity of their local contexts heightened the intensity of exchanges between the various actors and demonstrated how such dynamics translate and re-direct both intentionality and agency.

The actions that took place in these spaces were initiated by a group of 'proposers' (composed of other artists, architects and collaborators) who in the process of locating and surveying each site entered into a series of negotiations with interested parties and local citizens. This would often

---

[91] Other examples of recent projects that connect cultural enterprise in different ways with acts of commoning include Marjetica Potrč's *The Public Space Society* (2012) and *The Common's Project* and *The Common's Tower* (2013). The long term project by the artist run initiative AND…AND…AND *Commoning in Kassel and other proposals towards cultures of common(s), revocation, and non-capitalistic* (2010-2012), a series of interventions, workshops, public meeting, talks and situations developed over a two year period and presented over a period of 101 days at dOCUMENTA (13), Kassel, 2012, is also a significant contribution to this effort.

involve in the first instance the owners of the land, the city authorities, NGO's and local community groups, in some case such negotiations were challenging and complex but in all cases they can be seen as central to the potency of this work in terms of its capacity to reveal and re-direct agential process. The occupations that were to eventually take place in these lots were the product of convoluted processes of negotiation beginning with the 'proposers' of action for each site and the private owners of theses spaces. In most cases these 'proposers' were collaborating artists and architects each of whom worked closely together, with the owners and with local citizens to develop actions specific to each location.

Despite the intentional reflexivity of these dialogues the negotiations and subsequent actions make visible the intricacies of agential mechanics in urban environments. Ganz and Silva stated that the process of negotiation often involved a complex engagement with a wide range of interest groups, revealing tensions between the various parties in the activation of such a micro-political action, and raising questions about what kind of change is being brought about and who might benefit from it, commenting that:

'…while the owners of these properties do not build on these lots, we propose the temporary liberation of these spaces for public use. Since this happens, assuming this to be a benefit for the community, what compensation for the owner can be negotiated with public agencies, municipality and state government?' (2005: p.35).

What is made evident here is that the seemingly 'vacant' condition of these lots or the idea that these lots existed as empty or unused masked the fact that these parcels of land were commodities that reflect the varying degrees of value attributed to material resources within the fluctuations of the property and futures markets. These 'vacant lots' were vacant for a reason, perhaps due to the lack of capital held by the owners to develop the lots themselves or perhaps due to their perceived future value in the context of future investment and urban development.

In common with other commodities, land functions as a form of unproductive capital, its value determined by what it is perceived to be worth in relation to its capacity to support forms of

productive capital such a as industry or commerce. The accumulation of capital in land is often wholly dependent on how its acquisition might afford particular types and levels of future 'productivity', which we see most commonly in forms of material exploitation such as the extraction of physical resources or in more urban settings residential or commercial property development. However in urban contexts the process of converting land acquisitions into forms of profiteering necessitates extended periods of calculated 'unproductivity' to allow for its potential market value to rise, this is often determined by factors such as favourable geological surveying or the valuations given to adjacent land.

In the case of the *Vacant Lots* project it is the extent to which these forms of non-productivity or suspended productivity in unused and undeveloped lots might be transformed successfully into a different register of 'productivity' that befits or benefits 'public' use that were being surveyed and tested. In this sense the project takes land and the concept of land tenure out of the loop of conventional market logic, making it 'public' and stimulating owners and municipal authorities to change the manner in which they themselves negotiate its value and use. This strategy of 'making public', land currently held in private hands, is seen in stark contrast to processes that seek to reclaim public space from unofficial and unsanctioned 'publics' by overwriting such spaces with a narrative of a unified and consensual public or by simply tenuring it out to private management.

It is a strategy that calls into question whether the legal protections afforded to a security of tenure over land can produce wide reaching economic and social benefits.[92]

Entering such 'negotiations' or altering the manner in which negotiations are conducted thus probes existing bureaucratic process and catalyses sequences of exchange between agents that test the mandates given to certain social agents over others. By initiating a more creative interaction with

---

[92] The controversial economist Hernando de Soto has suggested that land titling offers a way of integrating the black economy into mainstream markets. According to de Soto parallel economies exist globally and the land and assets of such enterprises exist as forms of 'dead capital' that 'owners' cannot grow or invest as long as they continue to be held extra-legally by marginalised groups. His solution is the recognition, recording and protection of legal ownership of property thus rendering such capital visible and capable or circulating in the wider market economy and taxation system. Whilst his ideas appear to recognise the significance of the black economy and the need to address socio-economic exclusion his proposition is still based on the assumption that the formal economy can distribute wealth effectively and that individual land titling is a guarantee of protection against concentrations of land ownership and the impetus for wider community benefits.

the 'regulatory frameworks' (Awan, Schneider and Till 2011: p.41) that give shape to and maintain existing spatial conditions and relations the *Vacant Lots* project was able to expose the certainties on which those frameworks are built. By appropriating pockets of territory into which other visions of the relationship between urban subjects and environment could be projected. Reflecting on the project later Silva describes these, at times antagonistic 'negotiations', as an integral component of the experiment commenting that 'we used various tactics, adapted to various forces, and focused on the realization of the proposals…we call these tactics "infiltrations" (2009: p.102).

His use of the term 'infiltrations' carries with it the distinctive aspect of this project, that is how it sought to reclaim not just a physical space but to redraw the systems that govern the designation and access to those spaces. Ganz suggests that such 'infiltrations' are 'the effective insertion within legal systems, proposing new amendments to existing laws', or the actual revisions of law that 'allows some sort of benefit (such as a reduction in Urban Real Estate Tax, for example) that favors those proprietaries of land that lend to transformations in public space for collective use' (2013: interview conducted by author).

By redirecting the potentialities of such space towards communitarian use these vacant lots would be rendered contingent to more spontaneous forms of occupation and utilisation, not dictated by top-down planning or derived from acts of enclosure. Such a gesture is clearly embedded within a deeper questioning of the right to land ownership and how the effects of enclosures of common land are acutely felt in the context of contemporary urban spatialities.

Following the urban occupations and experiments of *Vacant Lots* (2004-8) Ganz and Silva have gone on to develop a web platform and travelling workshop (see Fig. 26), entitled A.E.T (Ativador de Espacialidades Temporárias – Temporary Spatialities Activator) (2012-13).[93] Employing a virtual platform to establish collaborations and negotiations between different interest groups A.E.T creates

---

[93] Workshops were held for five days in ten of Brazil's major urban centres, workshops introduced participants to the digital device and developed strategies for an exchange of ideas on how to formulate a network of temporary spatialities between different cities.

Figure 26.   Breno Silva and Louise Ganz – *A.E.T (Ativador de Espacialidades Temporárias – Temporary Spatialities Activator)* (2012-13). Posters and web-based announcements for A.E.T. public workshops (Rio de Janeiro and Porto Alegre).

a network through which unoccupied or abandoned urban sites might be activated into cultural, civic, agricultural or trading spaces. A.E.T operates as a device through which urban citizens might develop self-organised urban practices both within particular urban locations and across different urban centres. Such a device has the potential to radically de-centralise urban governance and act as a prototype for urban subjects to experiment with different political imaginaries. Cultural actions like those described in *Vacant Lots* (2004-8) and A.E.T (Temporary Spatialities Activator) (2012-13) can be seen to affect a multiplication of the possibilities of different programs of micro-political and eco-political actions that can shape social-natural organisation and co-existence within urban spatialities.

Atelier d'architecture autogeree: Assemblies/Common Worlds

It is possible to trace similar strategies and operations across other manifestations of critical spatial practice. The research fieldworks and project platforms initiated by atelier d'architecture autogeree (Studio for Self-managed Architecture) demonstrate a closely aligned set of principles in their engagement with the potential for activating spatial situations that cultivate both micro-political and eco-political experimentation. Atelier d'architecture autogeree (aaa) is an architectural collective and non-profit association that has developed as an interdisciplinary network founded in Paris in 2001 by architects, artists, urban planners, sociologists, students and local residents.[94]

As a collective practice it instigates diverse research processes, some of which culminate in participatory urban actions and physical structures that aim to renegotiate the uses of public space to create 'a network of self-managed places' (Petrescu 2005: p.43). Such actions and structures are utilized to develop sites and processes that can act as evolving cultural, social and political experiments, examining strategies of eco-logical sustainability, between urban subjects and environment(s).

---

[94] aaa was co-founded in Paris by architects Constantin Petcou and Doina Petrescu but has since grown into a network of international collaborators and participants

The activities of aaa bring more closely into view sources of material determination on social praxis, exposing how 'behind physical architecture is a social architecture', and examining how 'interim' uses of space might produce an architecture (material and social) 'otherwise'. Though the projects of aaa remain focused on asserting a role for self-organised forms of architectural practice that do not require the sanction of official clients, they retain a central imperative to challenge and transform existent urban policy. Their works exist across architectural and artistic cultures, primarily as long term design proposals and processes for flexible and collaborative 'architectures' but also in the form of participative workshops viewed in the context of international curatorial programs and smaller scale research-based spaces.

In 2005 aaa developed one of four projects commissioned for *Urban Clearance* in Belfast, a curatorial project that aimed to investigate the relationships between urban and social structures and tactics of urban intervention. The project took place within the context of a city that was still in the process of undergoing complex political transition as well as extensive infrastructural change designed to redevelop and re-invent its urban character in ways that befit a contemporary European capital city. Their response to the commission was an interactive project platform *Mechanics of Fluids (2005)* which was established as a 'workshop in progress' at the PS² project space, Belfast (see Fig. 27).

The workshop drew in participants and collaborators from the local community who were engaged in both official and more unofficial debates about local government plans to impose a system of taxation on local water supplies. The open access workshop researched and constructed an extensive database of information that documented local and global water conflicts and processes, and sought to create a working space around issues of water.

Mechanics of Fluids exposed to public scrutiny the official rationale behind the levying of a tax on a collectively owned natural resource. The project platform attempted to create an alternative public forum for addressing the particularities of the local tensions and resulting conflicts over access and control of common pool resources within a framework of wider interactions with trans-local debates over water commons. In creating such a platform it reiterated the fact that we all share a biological dependence on water and thus all have a share in its politics. This ongoing workshop structure was an attempt to create productive links between different disciplines, diverse communities and a range of actors via the flow, distribution and control of water through the urban infrastructure.

The project mapped the commodification of an abundant resource (at least in this region) drawing attention to the presence and significance of 'nature' in the dynamics of urban assemblages. As a result it acted as a rejection of the dominant settlement between social forces and natural entities that construct resource/commodities from water, a settlement that often results in uneven circulations of such a resource in urban spatialities.

Such a settlement is often embodied in the technological, social and political components with which we build our institutions of water. In the context of geographical regions where there is an abundant water resource the mechanisms and machinations of such institutions remain at a distance from public view and public scrutiny. However according to Le Bourhis in his analysis of the "socialization" of water' he claims that today, there is a growing need for a democratization of water. For him the seeming invisibility of 'the intervention of these institutions' in terms of how they control access and distribution to water is 'discrete, but it is still present' (Le Bourhis 2005: p.482).

Figure 27. Atelier d'architecture autogeree (aaa) - *Mechanics of Fluids* (2005). The public workshop held at PS² project space, Belfast invited participation with local groups and residents already mobilized around the issue of water taxation, developing strategies to locate this local struggle over resources within the wider global conflicts linked to water access and management.

Such a settlement is often embodied in the technological, social and political components with which we build our institutions of water. In the context of geographical regions where there is an abundant water resource the mechanisms and machinations of such institutions remain at a distance from public view and public scrutiny. However according to Le Bourhis in his analysis of the "socialization" of water' he claims that today, there is a growing need for a democratization of water. For him the seeming invisibility of 'the intervention of these institutions' in terms of how they control access and distribution to water is 'discrete, but it is still present' (Le Bourhis 2005: p.482).

In *Mechanics of Fluids* water is seen as forming part of our space of dwelling and therefore our commonality, by inserting a materialist perspective on the role of water it reflects the economic and environmental issues of water control and water conflicts, and asserts the idea of a materialist politics. In the specific case of how we conduct a 'water politics', the balance of an equal power of agents is rarely present, for even when its 'management demands a kind of cooperation, equality among users is not immediately essential' (Le Bourhis 2005: p.482). Going further Le Bourhis observes that 'many "water parliaments" do, in fact, operate as sites of collective decision, but, for the most part, their functioning still remains non-democratic' (2005: p.482).

'Other' forms of assembly around water are only just beginning to emerge, extensively as a result of the reach of pre-existing bureaucracies built from alliances between state and municipal authorities and sources of private enterprise.[95] However it is in the context of the increasing pressures being placed on our physical commons and the very real threat of water scarcity that makes the democratization of water 'a public issue today' (Le Bourhis 2005: p.484-5). Establishing a 'workshop in progress' *Mechanics of Fluids* thus facilitated a flow of alternative modes of thinking to enter public debate, cultivating a means of re-imagining the material and ethical relations between social

---

[95] Le Bourhis cites recent examples of in France where public committees and summits represent attempts to democratize the waters of the Dordogne and Garonne Rivers

and natural entities and exposing the need to develop more sustainable alignments between them, within the context of both urban and democratic space.

Mechanics of Fluids forms part of the wider practice of aaa, whose diverse projects combine architectural research processes with participatory experiments to explore social and urban realities and develop strategies for co-creating parallel physical and social formations. Perhaps their most widely discussed project is the *Eco-urban Network- ECObox*, initiated in the La Chapelle district of northern Paris in 2001. This long term project began as a means by which local residents could develop strategies for accessing and utilising marginal urban spaces left derelict by the rail infrastructure, in order to establish physical and social structures that might precipitate novel forms of life.

The La Chapelle district is somewhat dislocated from the rest of the city, effectively 'cut off' from the surrounding metropolitan areas by two main railway lines that emanate from the principle hub stations of central Paris. The proposed site for the project was at the heart of the La Chappelle district, an area of social deprivation with an expanding but marginalised community, a community that characterises the fluctuations of inhabitation witnessed in contemporary urban centres resulting from the far reaching effects of the trans-local economy. Working with this specific geography and demography the initial stages of this project involved mapping the collective desires of local citizens in terms of the potential uses for the space as well as establishing a network of existing organisations who might be stakeholders in change.

This phase was followed by a series of negotiations between aaa and the RFF (French Railway Company) to agree on some form of temporary public lease for the land. The eventual location secured for *ECObox* was a derelict plot of land of some 2000m², a site that consisted of interior and exterior spaces both fit for re-design. The site was a typical void space, left over in the urban matrix, such empty or wasted spaces are often perceived of as a problem from a municipal authority's

perspective because of the potential criminality that they can engender.   It is important to remember however that the legality of land ownership is not premised on any obligation to re-purpose land to prevent this.

Figure 28. Atelier d'architecture autogeree (aaa) - *ECObox* project, group discussions and garden (2001-onwards). The *ECOBox* project was centred on a nomadic gardening process constructed firstly in Halle Pajol, La Chapelle Paris (2002-4).   Later the garden was relocated to an alternative vacant site in the district (2005).

Disused land or land awaiting development is often adjacent to living space and is thus, in its continued state of disuse a potential blight on a locality. Conversely such spaces can proffer the potential for unofficial appropriations by local citizens or for more formalised manifestations of communitarian use or collective enterprise. Marginal spaces like these often exemplify the complex processes that mark out land from territory, attesting to the ways in which space has a significant role to as a mediator of public polity, as the site of consensus and dissensus and as a material foundation on which potential non-constitutional democratic discourses can be built.

The series of projects initiated under the *Eco-urban Network* acknowledge a necessity to adopt alternatives to vertical urban planning in ways that take account of local (and trans-local) actors and the material and psychological needs of social groups posed in a more ecological relationship to their environment(s). Adopting an eco-political urban methodology thus addresses economic, social, natural, individual needs together. In this sense the project is an example of how urban governance might be reprogrammed 'to preserve urban 'biodiversity' by encouraging the co-existence of a wide range of life-styles and living practices' (Atelier d'architecture autogérée (aaa) ca. 2001). This process has been described by aaa as one that is perpetually remade through an evolving assemblage of user's desires, for Petrescu the *ECObox* project was conceived as 'a tool for making the city habitable without domestication and control through official policies or private bodies, but by desiring, claiming, making its memory and its inhabitants' imaginings more intimate' (2005: p.44). Negotiating and working with local citizens the site's initial transformation began with the establishment of a temporary urban garden made using material gathered near the site. As a tactical start to the project the *ECObox* garden was conceived of as a nomadic gardening space or 'garden-in-process' rather than a fixed community resource (Petrescu 2005 p.46). The gardening space was quickly adapted as a site for ongoing experimentation with forms of urban creativity through discussion platforms and events in collaboration with community participants and external collaborators (see Fig. 28 and 29).

Existing as a nomadic space the garden was relocated to an alternative site after spending two years installed at its original location, as control was handed over to its growing network of users, a third relocation and reconstruction took place after a further two years. The metamorphic and mobile qualities of this 'gardening process' reflect how *ECObox* sought to operate as a site of shared desires and practices, a kind of 'civic laboratory' or 'critical observatory of urban politics' (Petrescu 2005: p.49, 50). As a site for productive encounters between urban subjects and their environment, or more specifically as a platform for urban commoning, the *ECObox* garden proceeded by developing and employing a number of co-designed tools or 'mobile devises' intended to expand collective action outside of the garden , by what aaa have termed a process of 'making rhizome' (Petrescu 2010: p.320). For them this rhizomatic process emerges from 'mechanisms of democratic spatial construction' that asserts a manifestation of an urban participation (and by extension an urban governance) that is not pre-determined, rather it is one that derives from, and responds to, the equal power of diverse agents and their contrasting living practices. Under such a description it is clear that it is not the *garden*, but the *gardening* (as a process of cultivation), that determines the ongoing construction of this more horizontal network of juxtaposed agencies.

Seeking to multiply potential pathways of collective enunciation and action meant cultivating socio-spatial devices that could open out the predominantly 'gardening' activities into new ecological territories. These mobile devises were practical tools for 'taking out and propagating' cooperative strategies into those spaces that surrounded the physical confines of the garden.

These devises or 'mediators', as Petrescu following Latour has described them (2010: p.321), took the form of a number of portable furniture units that acted as 'start-up' platforms for collective enterprise and alternative systems of socio-economic exchange (these included urban kitchen and media modules as well as modules for trade and knowledge, tool and literature exchange) (see Fig. 30).

Figure 29. Atelier d'architecture autogeree (aaa) – *Eco-Urban Network - ECObox project* (2001-onwards). The ECObox project initiated by aaa is characterised as a participatory network drawing in and on increasing levels of collective self-management. As such the flexibility of both the physical spaces and the activities/uses that such spaces make possible are orientated towards a progressive process of self-organising spaces and forms of commonality.

Figure 30. Atelier d'architecture autogeree (aaa) - ECObox project, mobile devices and events (2001-onwards). These mobile devises viewed as novel 'commons objects' are a means by which the space and activities of the nomadic garden could migrate into adjoining streets to propagate further forms of urban commoning.

These devices, like the material substratum on which the *ECObox* garden was temporarily fabricated,

became the agential mediators with which it was possible for aaa to initiate this process of 'making

rhizome' or with which it was possible for such a rhizomatic structure to autopoietically grow and

reproduce. Petrescu maintains that 'making rhizome' as a process should be thought of as a means

of 'constructing the infrastructure of the commons', in this sense all of the actors assembled in its

constituency contribute as 'gardeners of the commons' to cultivate a new production and

distribution of the common (2010: p.320). As such the scale and degree of modulations these

mediators were able to perform on existing patterns of co-existence is one way of measuring the

specific political ecology that *ECObox* was able to create and traverse.

The production of the common is therefore about the need to construct new common 'objects' or

actants which can be seen to act on future distributions of the common. If the formation of a

common world involves a re-constitution of the subject through the continual practice of isosthenic situations, it may also demand an openness to the agential presence of other actors.

The *ECObox* project like the other projects surveyed in this chapter represent cogent examples of how critical spatial practice is able to reveal and extend the role of our material environment in making claims to the city, tapping into the energies of unruly urban natures and quotidian practices to fabricate experimental agorae and actuate novel forms of urban governance and polity. Drawing on the agential operations of projects like *Vacant Lots* (2004-8) and *ECObox* (2001-onwards) I have attempted to outline some of the ways on which critical spatial practice affords us a capacity to carve out provisional and untested ecological spaces and assemble new constituencies of 'things' that map tentative common worlds. As a particular materialization of urban commoning such a form of praxis can be seen to contribute to the ways in which urban subjects might produce and distribute our physical and virtual commons and in doing so expand our understanding of the evolving political ecologies at work in contemporary urban spatialities.

Concluding: or Ecologies, Others and Other Knowledge(s)

'the questions of engaging with community, considerations of media, considerations of affect on local, national and international levels, the potentialities of unlocking loaded political issues from their compartmentalized dialogue, and finally the consideration of political efficacy, are all part of a growing ecology of artwork and political practice'

(Nato Thompson cited in Demos (ed.) 2013: p.143)

'New knowledge exchange corridors can be produced, between the specialized knowledge of institutions and the ethical knowledge of "community", and artists can have a role to facilitate this exchange, occupying the gap between the visible and the invisible'

(Teddy Cruz 2012: p.63)

In bringing together a constellation of concomitant practices and theories that have coalesced around the 'eco-logical', this writing seeks to create segued spaces for examining the mechanisms of cultural agency and for rethinking urban subjects and environment(s). These spaces have been shaped by a series of 'dialogues' I have instigated between cross-currents in eco-political theory and emerging forms of critical spatial practice. In this sense these spaces do not represent a comprehensive historical or geographical survey of new artistic tendencies. Instead their purpose is to facilitate other ways of thinking through the role of cultural production in mapping and probing the dynamics of relational agency, new formations of urban commons and a nascent political ecology.

My endeavour reflects the fact that in the last two decades, art and architectural cultures have begun to converge around a shared concern for 'ecological matters', centred on issues such as environmental damage, scarcity and sustainability. This phenomenon has produced wide ranging enactments and distributions of formal, conceptual and ideological engagements with 'nature', and a burgeoning literature on 'eco' art and architectures. In fact I would argue that in recent years the ubiquitous use of the term 'ecology' in this literature has meant that the term has often been

employed as a short-cut linguistic marker for *any* cultural artefact that appears to represent 'natural', and therefore 'ecological' processes. As such there is a risk that the term 'ecology' has become evacuated of any specific meaning, and where it has featured in the context of discourses on visual culture, there is a problem in situations where it has become a mere correlative of other widely used terms such as 'nature' and 'environment'. However we need only look to the changes occurring in aesthetic praxis in the last decade in particular to reflect on the need to re-assess the compatibility between such terms and the question of how we might proceed in formulating a more finely tuned 'ecological' discourse in visual/spatial culture.

Spurred on by a plethora of interdisciplinary eco-concepts and eco-sophical writings aesthetic praxis has produced a diverse array of spontaneous attempts by artists and architects to think and act 'ecologically' as they co-opt and transform epistemological and material territories. Whilst it is clear that there has been a need to formulate an appropriate discourse to survey the diversity of these enterprises in both historical and semiotic terms, a process that is in fact well underway, there is some way to go in determining the theoretical underpinnings of an ecological visual (or spatial) culture. The impetus for this writing thus came from a desire to contribute to this process by questioning how we apprehend the notion of the eco-logical from a non-essentialist perspective and furthermore how we might instigate more calibrated and reflexive modes of analysis.

My focus has therefore been on broadening the points of reference for the term 'ecology' beyond its common sense meaning, and examining the relatively under-theorised, but highly significant area (in eco-logical terms) of cultural production found at the interstices of art and architectural cultures. In doing so I have sought to re-direct the focus of current theoretical discourse on 'ecological art' towards a more rigorous engagement with its frames of reference and how it uses them to evaluate the role cultural production can play in enacting ways of thinking and acting eco-logically.

Working, as I have from the outset of this writing, on the supposition that the term 'ecology' refers to the articulation of the permeable and overlapping boundaries between nature *and* society I have

attempted to shift the frame of reference from natural ecologies, to an ecology of social natures *and* socio-natural environment(s). Accordingly the question of the role cultural production can play in enacting ways of thinking and acting eco-logically has been shifted to the context of the kinds of subjects and environment(s) that are produced through the deep imbrication of the social and natural spheres.

Sustained critical attention has not really been given to the ecological register of critical spatial practice, despite the fact that its operations are often uniquely positioned and disposed to explore the eco-logical territories of our urban spatialities. What has made them so valuable in the context of this writing is the fact that they often implement non-essentialist perspectives on our environment, developing effective methodologies through which we can gain insight into and test the politics of socio-natural environment(s).

Ecologies

The three interconnected chapters in this thesis are my attempt to establish a more eco-logical mode of analysis for elucidating the relationship between practice and theory, and examining the (co)roles each can play in the production of knowledge about a post-natural 'life-world'. A 'life-world' that routinely evades our attempts to capture it within neat epistemological frameworks modelled on a dichotomy of nature and culture. Tasked with creating a more ecological mode of analysis I have pointed to the growing imbrication of practice and theory, through the interplay of ideas and the interlacing of methodologies. Despite this, it does not follow that one is the mirror of the other, nor does it mean that one is subsumed by, or at the service of, the other. Seeking a more eco-logical mode of analysis my writing advocates the notion that practice and theory are held in a co-constitutive relationship and that it is at their points of intersection that our current discursive formations might be revitalised.

In Chapter 2 - 'Ecology of agencing' I have sought to develop an(other) methodology through which we might locate, track or understand the agential patterns left over from those sources of cultural production that manoeuvre in a life-world replete with diverse sources and forces of action and change. With recourse to both evolving eco-logical imaginaries from a range of disciplines and emerging practices that operate 'on the ground', this methodology is formulated as a mode of analysis predicated upon the apprehension of agency as a distributed and therefore ecological process. An 'ecology of agencing' is thus a conception of agency as those processes of change and 'making a difference' that occur *between* and *through* diverse actors and mediators. Agency or 'agencing' is an ecology in that it is spun out across a diversity of entities, a tangle of agential process only seen when we throw the social and the natural, humans and 'things' into a more unruly whole.

Weaving together existing ideas of a relational agency at work in socio-spatial assemblages with those who advocate an active material agency, this chapter positions cultural agency within a highly contested process that is distributed and mediated across a diverse collective of 'actors'. As such an 'ecology of agencing' should be read in the first instance as a way of apprehending a complex and 'messy' ontology, and in the second as a mode of analysis through which we might advance our accounts of the operations of cultural agency by recognising their attenuations within the wider locus and mechanics of 'agencing'.

An 'ecology of agencing' is therefore a methodological tool for posing difficult questions, such as what happens to our understanding of, and tendency to valorise aesthetic praxis, when we turn away from the idea that cultural agency is something that exists a priori ? Or what is at stake when we reject the idea that artistic intentionality is something that somehow escapes processes of translation or filtration by other actors? It is in making space for such questions that an 'ecology of agencing' is poised as an experimental mode for capturing the outcomes or affects of constituencies of cultural labour, seen as the products of a series of translations of agency

between us and 'things'. An 'ecology of agencing' thus discloses an agential geography drawn from an unpredictable and complex over-determination between a diverse collective of actors in order to track the affective encounters between diverse 'bodies' of action, cultural and otherwise.

An 'ecology of agencing' should not be misconstrued as an inhibitor of human action or as something that appears to negate the possibility of cultural agency. Instead it recognises that patterns of agencing, human or more specifically cultural, are subject to a multitude of cross-cutting forces: a condition that for practitioners demands more creative manifestations of 'taking control' or 'making a difference', by forging novel alignments between us and 'things', that in turn work to catalyse new agential sequences. For those of us who attempt to write or sound out the composition of this agential ecology it demands a commitment to forging a heterogeneous perspective through which cultural agency can be understood to operate within. By examining the form and scope of a range of critical spatial practices and the deeply politicised socio-natural environment(s) in which their dynamics were nested, I have set out to contextualise the agential mechanisms of cultural production in the broader ecology I have just described above, demonstrating the potential of such a methodology to interrogate agential process.

Setting cultural agency within this more expansive and multivalent field of action, means that the nexus of agency (and intentionality) is dislocated and translated between 'things', making the dynamics of an 'ecology of agencing' something rather unpredictable and ultimately very challenging to track. Coming to terms with this unpredictability and rising to the challenges it provokes is essential to developing our understanding of the operations of cultural agency, and human agency more generally. Not to do so risks falling back on the security found in more anthropocentric conceits as well as oversimplifying our understanding of participation and culpability in processes of change.

As I have already asserted above a dislocated or distributed notion of agency has profound implications for any 'bodies' of action, cultural or otherwise. Re-orientating our thinking about

agency away from the centrality of individual agents or self-contained 'bodies' of action towards an 'ecology of agencing', that is de-centred and trans-positional, is a vital task for the writing of visual/spatial cultures. This is especially the case in respect to those practices whose transversal manoeuvres, between disciplines and contexts, mean that they are brought into active contact with a diversity of forces and entities that populate socio-natural environment(s).

That said my own attempt to formulate a mode of analysis fit for such a purpose represents a provisional methodology for advancing our accounts of the operations of cultural agency. There is further work to be done in developing the potential of such a mode of analysis to account for, or test the efficacy and reach of cultural agency from micro to macro scales. One way to proceed would be to track novel patterns of agency that occur as the contours of an ecology of agencing are in the process of being re-defined by sources of cultural agency. This would necessitate a form of fieldwork that diagrams such changes through a super-imposition of accounts generated from differing perspectives. It is significant to point out here that in respect of tracking of these patterns and documentation the network of interactions brought about by examples of critical spatial practice, practitioners themselves have already taken some significant steps towards experimenting with devices that diagram and disseminate the agential capacities of their own initiatives.

In this respect two practices, discussed in Chapter 4 – *Ecological Assemblies* are pertinent here. Louise Ganz and Breno Silva's A.E.T (Temporary Spatialities Activator) (2012-13), an extension of their long term project *Vacant Lots: Experimental Occupations* (2004-8) was designed to operate as a device through which urban citizens might develop and coordinate self-organised urban practices. On another level it is an example of a prototype for visualising the changing network of users, and uses, that are generated in the processes on re-configuring socio-natural environment(s). A similar if perhaps more systematic approach is evident in the case of Atelier d'architecture autogeree who routinely diagram the evolving collective components of their 'rhizomatic' structures through the use of mapping systems and databases, evident in their project *Eco-urban Network- ECObox* (2001

onwards). Both of these examples are symptomatic of how critical spatial practice collapses easy distinctions between thought and action, research and practice, routinely blurring inter-disciplinary fields whilst synthesising and re-directing their established methodologies.[96]

Developing a mode of analysis that captures the potentially complex interactions between 'actors' and the novel patterns of agency they instigate therefore requires expanding the means by which we produce accounts of how such interactions and patterns unfold. With this in mind I caution against the idea that such a mode of analysis should ever become equivalent to a universalising theory of cultural agency or a methodology that aspires to definitively delineate the qualities and efficacies of cultural agency.

Instead an 'ecology of agencing' should be seen as a way of generating a plurality of accounts responsive to the specificities of the constituencies being gathered over time, rather than the production of a single overarching account that tracks interactions/patterns retrospectively. Building a plurality or accumulation of accounts demonstrates an awareness of how the 'situatedness' of cultural production determines the gradations of co-agencing it is able to bring about. It also goes some way to contributing to the modelling of a discursive formation that meets the demands of thinking eco-logically and writing with those practices that attempt to 'think' and act eco-logically themselves.

Others

Continuing this attempt to develop a more finely tuned 'ecological' discourse for examining visual/spatial culture, Chapter 3 – *Acts of Commoning* shifts focus onto the agential mechanisms of cultural production in respect to their capacity to influence new conceptions and new formations of urban commons. Discussion in this chapter locates cultural agency in relation to recent inter-disciplinary discourses on the commons. Such discourses have become re-energized in recent years

---

[96] It is worth pointing out that from the range of case studies of critical spatial practice presented in this writing almost all consist of a membership of initiators and participants who operate both inside and outside the confines of institutionalised pedagogy.

as new responses to the effective governance of common pool resources and the problems posed by an increasingly bio-political urban space have surfaced. In this context any exposition of the affects of visual/spatial culture on processes of commoning requires thinking about the gestures and ramifications of cultural production as they permeate socio-natural environment(s). This entails the development of a different method for the writing of critical spatial practice, a form of praxis whose open-ended initiatives and heterogeneous constituencies , built on their proximity to everyday life and their processual nature, mean that it is no longer desirable or appropriate to produce smooth or self-contained accounts of cultural 'objects'. Instead accounts of such cultural production need to prioritise how such practices intersect and correspond with their changing network of constituents, illuminating what they are able 'to do'. My method can therefore be characterised as a way of attempting to elucidate the mechanisms of critical spatial practice through a more connective account of these intersections and correspondences. As such it develops a discursive mode formed *with* things as they interact with one another. In this respect Latour's (2004b) attempt to formulate a politics of representation between the sciences and the humanities, where 'matters of fact' give way to 'matters of concern' has been productive in the context of the writing of collective, processual and situated forms of aesthetic praxis. Examining critical spatial practices as 'matters of concern' means recognising the significance of their embeddedness in socio-natural environment(s) and tracking their points of contact with 'others' other subjects and 'objects', to consider how cultural labour figures in the cultivation and transformation of commonality.

Employing such a method is a means to examine how recent examples of critical spatial practice can be seen to interpose in the conceptual division of the commons into 'natural' and 'virtual' substances. I have illustrated this through the ways in which their activities can forestall the idea that an 'artificial commons' is exclusively tied to the social dynamics of the metropolis and that a 'natural' commons somehow remains outside of this jurisdiction. Working on, and testing concepts such as 'public' realm', 'common interest' and commonality, such forms of praxis are an important indicator of how provisional concepts like 'public' and 'common interest' can become synchronized

with the changing distributions, administrations, transformations and agencies of material resources as they circulate in urban spatialities.

Discussing the artist collective Fallen Fruit and their ongoing project *Public Fruit* (2004 onwards), this chapter locates the synchronization of 'natural' resources and 'virtual' concepts in the context of the particular energies present in our urban commons. More precisely it distills them through the particular condition of urban natures. Focusing on urban natures in this way enables a more socio-natural understanding of an urban commons to emerge, one understood as a messy hybrid of, or an 'interzone' between a 'natural' and 'virtual' commons'. Projects examined in this chapter are significant in that they shift the perception of control over access to 'natural' resources, by setting a precedence for the effective appropriation of urban natures, for unofficial resource sharing and formations of commonality.

I draw attention to the ways in which such projects 'work with' the impurities (and hybridity) of an urban commons to expose how land, or perhaps more accurately the bio-forms it supports, can become complex 'socio-natural products' through which we think and act our commonality. In doing so I claim that in an urban commons materiality thus functions as a mediator through which abstract notions of the 'public realm' and the 'public good', 'civic responsibility' and 'civic obligation' are constructed. By retaining the link between these 'natural' and 'virtual' domains such practices enable us to reflect on how our interactions with our material commons can produce and influence the kinds of virtual commons we as humans seek to operate

In this way I argue that critical spatial practice can make visible the link between matter and human matters echoing the need to scrutinise what kind of commons and what forms of commoning are yielded in the context of post-naturalism. Critical spatial practices as manifested in the particular examples I have discussed above, involve the generation of heterogeneous compositions between various actors/actants and a creative proliferation of connectivity between natural and cultural

entities. Therefore it follows that they also interpose in the making and remaking of commonality. As such they produce experimental formats and durations of commonality that enable us to broaden our conception and understanding of both agential process, and who or what we consider to be active socio-political components. Asking us, in what ways might humans and non-humans be assembled together and what ways can they be seen to act together?

This question is extended into a parallel line of enquiry in Chapter 4 – *Ecological Assemblie*s. Here I ask whether cultural agency, in the specific form of critical spatial practice, is able to construct micro-experiments in democratic participation and reveal the controversies surfacing in a nascent political ecology. This section of writing is thus concerned with how we might disclose a kind of politics that transpires through the horizontal convocation of 'nature' and 'culture'. By foregrounding urban spaces as the principle sites in which a politics of the common is currently being contested this chapter pinpoints the kinds of urban spaces and the kinds of assemblies that critical spatial practices are operating *in* and *within*.

Beginning with the assertion that the polis has historically been the locus of a shared polity, the site of one and many agoras, this chapter builds on the argument that today it is in the spaces left over in the urban matrix, those unruly spaces or spaces of urban natures, where new claims to the city are frequently being formulated. In other words it is in the context of these marginal spaces where an interrogation of the basis of democratic principle is often being conducted. Furthermore I contend that it is in occupying, appropriating or making claims to such spaces, where the entanglement of political process with our material environment appears to mandate for a revised political ecology.

Drawing on the idea that the urban commons is a site or forum in which we attempt to articulate and actualize other ways of thinking and being 'in common' or a space for precipitating other 'forms of life', the heterogeneous constituencies of critical spatial practice are examined from the perspective of their capacity to elicit novel 'democratic' assemblies. In many examples of spatial practice this potential for precipitating other 'forms of life' is something that is achieved by locating

cultural action within the marginal spaces and the marginal communities of urban spatialities. This is certainly the case for the two examples subject to close analysis in this final chapter. The first, *Vacant Lots: Experimental Occupations* (2004-8) took place across a network of vacant lots located in the diverse community spaces of Belo Horizonte and Fortaleza, Brazil. The second, the ongoing project *Eco-urban Network- ECObox* (2001 onwards) by Atelier d'architecture autogeree was developed on a derelict site found between railway infrastructure and residential space in the La Chappelle district of Northern Paris.

Located here unsolicited urban interventions become a means to test the agoric potential found in marginal spaces and unofficial forms of assembly. It is also where the notion of a distributed democracy, evidenced in shared forms of urban governance can be claimed and proliferated. Urban interventions like those seen in examples of critical spatial practice often operate without recourse to official urban planning and therefore exemplify attempts to practice space in non-normative ways that return us to some of the most fundamental questions about the efficacy and organisation of democratic process. Through an interrogation of the organisation of existing democratic processes, these practices articulate a desire to balance an equal power of agents. It is this that I believe makes them significant to the development of our understanding of how a revised political ecology might be formulated. It is through the 'presencing' of a diversity of agents and the open-endedness of action mobilised in their operations, where such practices demonstrate an important response to the agential and constitutional endowment of the 'other', an 'other' that in a renewed political ecology would also include encounters with other kinds of (non-human) agents.

Through a critical engagement with specific projects the final chapter elucidates the manner in which critical spatial practice can afford us a capacity to carve out provisional assemblies of 'others' and 'other' agencies. I show that by testing the eco-logical composition of urban spaces and the new constituencies of 'things' that gather within them these practices are a way of mapping tentative common worlds. It is by creating and traversing novel productions of the common,

constructing new common 'objects' and new alignments of actants where they can be seen to act on future distributions of the common. Recognising that any formation of a common world involves a re-constitution of the subject through the continual practice of balancing the equal power of agents, such practices also signal an openness to how the production of subjectivity is equally about an opening up to the agential presence and affects of 'other' actors.

The projects surveyed in this chapter offer up salient insights into how cultural agencies can tap into the extant energies of marginal spaces and the communities that routinely occupy them. I demonstrate that channelling and extending those agencies already found in unruly urban natures and spontaneous quotidian practices can be a way to fabricate experimental agorae and actuate novel forms of urban governance and polity. My assertion that cultural agency has a role in the production of the commons is founded on how such a form of praxis is able to reveal and in significant ways, 'work with', the evolving political ecologies of contemporary urban spatialities.

Other Knowledge(s)

Tracing the shifting operations of critical spatial practices in relation to our inhabited environment I have, throughout this writing, consistently avowed that such a form of trans-disciplinary praxis has a vital role to play in eliciting new knowledge(s) about the 'post-natural' and what kinds of urban subjects and what kinds of environment(s) the 'post-natural' are producing in our contemporary urban spatialities. In other words I argue that they have the capacity to reveal, test and extend how urban spatialities and their populations (both human and non-human), exist and function as complex eco-logical formations.

The initiatives of critical spatial practice routinely transgress disciplinary boundaries and their methodologies frequently collapse divisions between research and practice, thought and action. In so doing they work to reconfigure the discursive modes that we currently employ in the field of visual/spatial culture to account for eco-art or eco-architectural practices. Equally they can press

upon discursive modes employed outside of the field, in philosophy, political science and urban studies, that attempt to delineate more eco-political perspectives. It is this 'indiscipline' and a desire to institute productive encounters between existing patterns of socio-spatial praxis and aesthetic praxis, quotidian and 'expert' cognisance, that qualifies critical spatial practice as a distinct and itinerant form of knowledge production.

If critical spatial practice has a role to play in the production of knowledge, questions of how, where and with whom such knowledge is produced remain critical. Confronting head-on the notion that culture, society and nature are mutually exclusive territories the operations of critical spatial practice are ineluctably transversal in nature, between disciplines, and between subjects/objects. It is how these operations are capable of revealing previously invisible connective tissues between 'things' where critical spatial practice most clearly questions the hierarchized structure of knowledge systems that favour a procedural enquiry of distinct/discrete objects of study. Such a capability indicates that critical spatial practice is thus bound up in a wider rethinking and remaking of pedagogical practice where the 'production of knowledge is a form of intervention that presupposes constant experimentation' (Brophy and Touza 2007: p.130). The distinctive form of knowledge production or 'research' found in critical spatial practice occurs not to confirm to the initiators/collaborators what they already know, but more precisely what they do not know. The research orientation of critical spatial practice is thus characteristic of a form of co-research, undertaken without a predefined object, situated in extra-academic contexts between subjects, in ways that stimulate 'another relationship with popular knowledges' (Colectivo Situaciones 2007: p.189).

There is of course scope to develop much further how spatial practices can be recognised for the distinctive way in which they appear to produce knowledge and this is certainly an area of future work. In the first instance this necessitates that we accurately mark out the difference between knowledge and discourse. Knowledge, is according to Michel Foucault (1972), governed by

discourse, and shaped by the discursive practices that we form, that in turn constitute us. As such discursive practices are highly ideological in that that precede any notion of knowledge understood as objective 'truth'. Such discursive practices are in effect the sanction for what may be considered as appropriate objects of knowledge and the authority that determines who has jurisdiction over how those objects are represented. In this sense the production of knowledge, or what is representable as knowledge, is that which is constituted *from* and *within* the discursive practices that we habitually occupy and use. Under Foucault's treatment knowledge is 'that which one can speak in a discursive practice…knowledge is also the space in which the subject may take up a position and speak of the objects with which he deals in his discourse'(Foucault 1972: p.182)

Understood in this way discourse is the determination of, on one level what particular 'things', over others, are deemed worthy of study, and on another level, who gets to speak about them. Knowledge is something contingent and mediated through interests, experts and systems of codification (language, data etc.), a condition that leads Donna Haraway to conclude that 'all knowledge is a condensed node in an agonistic power field' (1988: p.577). It is easy to see how in the context of art and architectural cultures knowledge (of spatial and ecological matters) is something that becomes mediated solely through its primary objects of study (hence the rather restrictive categorisation into eco-art and eco-architectures) and through the current discourses employed in the context of the academy.

Transformations in discursive practices can therefore be seen as the principle catalyst for the formation of 'new' knowledge(s). It is in this light that our understanding of the term 'knowledge production' should be alert to the ways in which it reflects the ideological struggles that can determine and modulate what we at any given time might refer to as 'knowledge'. 'Knowledge production' is therefore best thought of as how a 'knowledge of things' is produced, translated and controlled. More precisely still it is that which describes the processes that govern who gets to speak and in what ways. In areas of specialist knowledge like 'architecture' or 'art', knowledge

production can in common with other disciplines remain a process determined by the perimeters of their own manifestations of institutionalised discourse and those who get to use them. However art and architectural cultures, visual cultures and perhaps more precisely spatial cultures do exist in an extra-academic context, where other knowledge(s) can exert an influence on or even transform those discursive formations.

Thinking through the notion of knowledge production in relation to the artistic field has produced a flurry of publications in the recent years, many of which have focussed attention on the problems of conflating practice and research (Allen (2011), Hlavajova, et. al (2008), Holert (2009) and O'Neill and Wilson (2011). Central to such discussions have been justifiable anxieties over the possible instrumentalisation of aesthetic praxis and a questioning of what is at stake when artistic production is envisioned as a potential 'new knowledge' in the wider knowledge economy.

Whilst such debates are vital my concern has primarily been located in understanding how cultural enterprises like those that I have characterised as 'critical spatial practice' are seen to develop specific pedagogical initiatives that transgress institutional borders or where, to cite Miessen and Basar once again, they 'trespass- or 'participate' – in neighbouring or alien knowledge-spaces' (2006: p.23). In the contemporary artistic field we have witnessed an increasing emphasis on research orientated modes production both inside and outside of the academy. Seeking to understand how artistic production may constitute a specific form of knowledge production therefore means thinking through the means by critical spatial practices are able to redirect existing discursive practices towards obscured objects of knowledge or how they might produce knowledge in 'other ways'. One of the factors that clearly marks out the convergence of art and architectural praxis around notions of the eco-logical is how such practices produce encounters with a diversity of 'other' agents, interacting with as well as learning from their existing capacities and 'ways of knowing'.

Through a direct engagement in the dynamics of provisional eco-logical formations, interacting with other agents and actants, critical spatial practices can draw on the potential to elicit new

knowledge(s) about the 'post-natural' and the kinds of urban subjects and the kinds of environment(s) that the 'post-natural' are producing in our contemporary urban spatialities. But this potential is one that is tapped through a processual rather than procedural enquiry. It is the open-endedness and unscripted nature of such operations that allow such connective tissues to become disclosed. As such this is a form of praxis that trades on its itinerancy, something that is increasingly evident in the recent détournement that aesthetic praxis has made into the terrain of radical pedagogy. Sarat Maharaj (2002) has suggested that one of the most significant things that has come to characterise contemporary aesthetic praxis is its diffusion into non-art realms. Another is how it has diversified cultural labour into experimental modes that are not immediately identifiable as art. For him this has produced a form of praxis that produces 'spasmic, interdisciplinary probes, transitive, haphazard cognitive investigations, dissipating interactions, imaginary archiving, epidemiological statistics, questionnaires and proceedings, ructions and commotions that are not pre-scripted' (2002b: pp.71-2).

This is a kind of itinerant model of knowledge production that shares a similar tendency to what Teddy Cruz has termed a 'new urban pedagogy' (2012). Here Cruz argues that where cultural labour is situated in urban space 'new knowledge exchange corridors' should be created, whereby artists and architects become the designers of experiments with socio-spatial and economic conditions and relations by initiating 'collaborations across institutions and jurisdictions' (2012: p.62). In this way the role of critical spatial practice can be thought of as something that acts *with* the intelligences and knowledge(s) that are 'embedded' in the everyday practices of 'informal urbanization'. The idea of forming knowledge correspondences with other intelligences echoes what Janna Graham (2011) has termed the 'artist as co-researcher', something that necessarily entails recognising the validity of, and working with 'subaltern knowledges' (Colectivo Situaciones 2004, cited in Graham 2011: p.130). For Cruz such correspondences or collaborations are the basis for 'new critical interfaces between research, artistic intervention and the production of the city' (2012: p.63). Extending Cruz's line of

thought further it is also the basis for the creation of critical 'knowledge interactions' between artists, architects, researchers and the multitude of agents producing eco-logical space.

Thinking critical spatial practice in this context endows it with a potential to operate as a means to access or invent 'other ways of thinking-knowing, other epistemological engines', that operate across diverse sites of production and dissemination (Maharaj 2002b: p.72). Manifested as a form of action and thought accumulated in constituencies or heterogeneous compositions of actors/actants critical spatial practice has a capacity to become a generator of 'knowledge interactions', between diverse social groups and between those groups and 'things'.

Initiating experimental research laboratories and platforms of action that coalesce around heterogeneous constituencies of actors actualises a series of 'knowledge interactions' that are an example of how cultural labour might forge 'both "other" ways of knowing and ways of knowing "otherness" (Maharaj 2002b: p.72). Throughout this writing I have drawn on the capacities and potential of these practices to operate as alternative epistemological devices in my own attempt to reconfigure the discursive modes we call upon to examine the role that cultural agency has in developing ways of thinking and acting eco-logically. It is in this respect that this research can be viewed as a co-production with practice and a 'practical' demonstration of how we might proceed in tracking the active co-constitution of theory and practice in the context of eco-logical matters.

Bibliography

Abbas, Niran (ed.) (2005) *Mapping: Michel Serres* Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press

Abrams, Janet and Hall, Peter (eds.) (2006) *Else/where Mapping: New Cartographies of Networks and Territories* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Design Institute

Agamben, Giorgio (1993) *The Coming Community* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press

Agamben, Giorgio (1996) *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* California: Stanford University Press

Agamben, Giorgio (2000) *Means to and End: Notes on Politics* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press

Allen Felicity (ed.) (2011) *Education: Documents of Contemporary Art* Cambridge, Mass. and London: Whitechapel Art Gallery and MIT Press

Amin, Ash and Thrift, Nigel (2002) *Cities: Re-imagining the Urban* Cambridge: Polity Press

An Architektur (2010) 'On the Commons: A Public Interview with Massimo de Angelis and Stavros Stavrides', in *e-flux* journal no.17 June-August

Andreotti, Libero and Costa, Xavier (eds.) (1997) *Situationists: Art, Politics, Urbanism* Barcelona: Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona

Andrews, Max (ed.) (2006) *Land, Art: A Cultural Ecology Handbook* London: RSA and Arts Council

Appadurai, Arjun (ed.) (1986) *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Araeen, Rasheed (2009) 'Eco-aesthetics: A Manifesto for the Twenty First Century', *Third Text*, Vol 23, Issue 5, pp.679-684

Arnott, Stephen J. (2001) 'Liminal Subjectivity and the Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm of Felix Guattari' [online] available at: <http://limen.mi2/limen1-2001/stephen_arnott.html> [accessed 19/11/2007]

Assad, Maria L (1999) *Reading with Michel Serres: An Encounter with Time* Albany: State University of New York Press

Atelier d'architecture autogérée (*aaa*) (ca. 2001) 'Ecobox Project' [online] available at: <http://www.urbantactics.org/projects/ecobox/ecobox.html> [accessed 29/09/06]

Atelier d'architecture autogérée and Peprav (eds.) (2007) *Urban Act: a Handbook for Alternative Practice,* Paris: aaa/peprav [online] available at: <http://wwwpeprav.net> [accessed 28/01/2009]

Atelier d'architecture autogérée and Rhyzom (eds.) (2010) Trans-Local Act: Cultural Practices Within and Across, Paris: aaa/peprav [online], available at: Available at: <http://www.rhyzom.net/2011 /02/02/translocalact.pdf> [accessed 10/11/2012]

Awan, Nishat, Schneider, Tatiana and Till, Jeremy (2011) *Spatial Agency: Other Ways of Doing Architecture* London: Routledge

Bang Larsen (2010) 'The Jury Stays Out: Art, Activism and Art's New Normativity' in *Concept Store*, No.3 (Art, Activism and Recuperation), Spring 2010, pp.26.33

Bateson, Gregory (1973) *Steps to and Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution and Epistemology* St.Albans: Paladin

Barad, Karen (1996) 'Meeting the Universe Halfway: Realism and Social Constructivism Without Contradiction', in *Feminism, Science, and the Philosophy of Science*, Lynn Hankinson Nelson and Jack Nelson. Dordrecht (eds.) (1996), Holland: Kluwer Press, pp.161-194

Barad, Karen (2012a) "Intra-Actions" - Interview with Adam Kleinmann' in *Mousse: an Issue about Documenta (13)*, No.34, June, 2012, pp.76-81

Barad, Karen (2012b) 'Nature's Queer Performativity (the authorized version)', in *Kvinder, Køn og forskning/ Women, Gender and Research*, No. 1-2, 2012, pp. 25-53

Baum, Kelly (2010) *Nobody's Property: Art, Land, Space 2000-2010* New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press

Bauman, Zygmunt (1998) *Globalisation: The Human Consequences* Cambridge: Polity Press

Bauman, Zygmunt (2000) *Liquid Modernity* Cambridge: Polity Press and Blackwell Publishers

BAVO (eds.) (2007) *Cultural Activism Today: The Art of Over-Identification* Amsterdam: Episode Publishers

BAVO (eds.) (2007) *Reflect: No. 6: Urban Politics Now, Re-Imagining Democracy in the Neoliberal City* Rotterdam: NAi Publishers

Beasley, Mark et al (eds.) (2000) *Democracy!: Socially Engaged Art Practice* London: Royal College of Art in association with the Arts Council of England

Bennett, Jane (2010) *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* Durham and London: Duke University Press

Berardi, Franco (2008) Felix *Guattari: Thought, Friendship and Visionary Cartography* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

Berens, Lewis H [1906] (2008) *The Digger Movement: Radical Communalism in the English Civil War* St. Petersburg, Florida: Red and Black Publishers

Best, Stephen and Kellner, Douglas (1991) *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations* London: Macmillan

Bhagat, Alexis and Mogel, Lize (eds.) (2008) *An Atlas of Radical Cartography* California: Journal of Aesthetics and Protest Press

Billing, Joanna, Lind, Maria and Nilsson, Lars (eds.) (2007) *Taking the Matter into Common Hands: Contemporary Art and Collaborative Practices* London: Black Dog

Bishop, Claire (2004) 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics' in *October* 110, Fall, pp.51-79

Bishop, Claire (2006a) 'The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents' in Artforum, February pp.178-183

Bishop, Claire (ed.) (2006b) *Participation: Documents of Contemporary Art* Cambridge, Mass. and London: Whitechapel Art Gallery and MIT Press

Blundell-Jones, Peter, Till, Jeremy, and Petrescu, Doina (eds.) (2005) *Architecture and Participation* London: Spon Press

Bollier, David (2003) *Silent Theft: The Private Plunder of Our Common Wealth* New York and London: Routledge

Boeri, Stefano (n.d.) 'USE Uncertain States of Europe' [online] available at: <http://subsol.c3.hu/subsol_2/contributors0/boeritext.html> [accessed 23/07/09]

Boeri, Stefano/Multiplicity (2002) 'An Eclectic Atlas of Urban Europe', in Enwezor, O, et. al. (eds.) *Documenta_platform 1: Democracy Unrealized*, Documenta (11th 2002 Kassel Germany), Ostifildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, pp.209-229

Boeri, Stefano and Bregani, Maddalena (2003) *Uncertain States of Europe: USE Multiplicity – A Trip Through Changing Europe* Milano: Skira Editore

Botkin, Daniel (1990) *Discordant Harmonies* New York: Oxford University Press

Bourriaud, Nicolas (2002) *Relational Aesthetics* Dijon: Les presses du réel

Bourriaud, Nicolas (2009) *The Radicant* New York: Lucas and Steinberg

Bradley, Will and Esche, Charles (eds.) (2007) *Art and Social Change: A Critical Reader* London: Tate Publishing and Afterall

Bradley, Will Hannula, Mika Ricupero, Cristina and Superflex (eds.) (2006) *Self-Organisation/Counter-Economic Strategies* New York: Sternberg

Bradstock, Andrew (ed.) (2000) *Winstanley and the Diggers 1649-1999* London: Routledge

Braudel, Fernand ([1979]1981) *The Structures of Everyday Life: The Limits of the Possible Volume 1: Civilisation and Capitalism 15th – 18th Century* trans. Sian Reynolds London: Collins

Braudel, Fernand ([1979]1982) *The Wheels of Commerce Volume 2: Civilisation and Capitalism 15th – 18th Century* trans. Sian Reynolds London: Collins/Fontana

Braun, Bruce (2005) 'Environmental Issues: Writing a More-than-human Urban Geography', *Progress in Human Geography,* 29: pp.635-50

Braun, Bruce and Castree, Noel (eds.) (1998) *Remaking Reality: Nature at the Millennium* London: Routledge

Braun, Bruce and Castree, Noel (eds.) (2001) *Social Nature: Theory, Practice and Politics* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers

Brophy, Enda and Touza, Sebastián (2007) 'Rethinking the Intellectual: Introduction', in Coté, Mark, et al. (eds.) (2007) *Utopian Pedagogy: Radical Experiments Against Neoliberal Globalization*, Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, pp.129-132

Bryant, Levi, Harman, Graham, and Srnicek, Nick (eds.) (2011) *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism* Melbourne: re.press

Buchanan, Ian and Lambert, Greg (eds.) (2005) *Deleuze and Space* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press

Budak, Adam et al (eds.) (2008a) *Manifesta 7: Companion* Milano: Silvana

Budak, Adam et al (eds.) (2008b) *Manifesta 7: Index* Milano: Silvana

Burns, David, Viegener, Matias and Young, Austin (2008) 'Take Back the Fruit: Public Space and Community Activism' in Knechtel (ed.) (2008) *Food* Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press pp.92-103

Burns, David, Viegener, Matias and Young, Austin (n.d.) About Fallen Fruit [online] available at < http://www.fallenfruit.org/index.php/about/> [accessed 05/02/08]

Burns, David, Viegener, Matias and Young, Austin (2012) Interview with Fallen Fruit conducted by author [e-mail correspondence with author 2008-2013]

Butler, Judith (2005) *Giving an Account of Oneself* New York: Fordham University Press

Calirman, Claudia (2012) *Brazilian Art Under Dictatorship* Duke University Press: Durham and London

Callon, Michael and Law, John (1995) 'Agency and the Hybrid Collectif', in *The South Atlantic Quarterly* Vol.94, 1995, pp.481-507

Capra, Fritjof (1997) *The Web of Life: A New Scientific Understanding of Living Systems* New York: Anchor Books

Casey, Edward (1998) *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*, Berkley and LA: University of California Press

Castells, Manuel (1989) *The Informational City: Information Technology, Economic Restructuring, and the Urban-regional Process* Oxford: Basil Blackwell

Castree, Noel (2003) 'Environmental Issues: Relational Ontologies and Hybrid Politics', in *Progress in Human Geography Vol.*27, 2, 2003, pp.203-211

Castree, Noel (2005) *Nature* London: Routledge

Certeau, Michel de (1988) *The Practice of Everyday Life* (trans. Steven Rendall) Berkeley: University of California Press

Certeau, Michel de, Giard, Luce and Mayol, Pierre (1998) *The Practice of Everyday Life Volume 2: Living and Cooking* (trans. Timothy J. Tomasik) Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press

Chan, Gaye and Sharma, Nandita (2003) 'Eating in Public' [online], available at <http://nomoola.com/gardens/diggers_p1.html>, [accessed 09/10/2008]

Chan, Gaye and Sharma, Nandita (2011) Interview with Eating in Public conducted by author [e-mail correspondence with author2008-2013]

Chesters, Graeme (2007) 'Complex and Minor: Deleuze and the Alterglobalization Movement(s)' in Hickey-Moody, A and Malins, P (eds.) *Deleuzian Encounters: Studies in Contemporary Social Issues* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan pp.236-250

Choi, Esther and Trotter, Marrikka (eds.) (2010) *Architecture at the Edge of Everything Else* Cambridge, Mass.: Work Books and MIT Press

Clark, Nigel (2000) 'Botanizing on the Asphalt? The Complex Life of Cosmopolitan Bodies' in *Body and Society*, 6: 3-4, pp.12-33

Coles, Alex (ed.) (2000) *Site Specificity: The Ethnographic Turn De-, Dis-, Ex-,* Vol. 4, London: Black Dog Publishing

Coles, Alex and Defert, Alexia (eds.) (1998) *The Anxiety of Interdisciplinarity, De-, Dis-, Ex-,* Vol.2, London: Black Dog Publishing

Colebrook, Claire (2005) *Gilles Deleuze* London and New York: Routledge

Colectivo Situaciones (2007) 'On the Researcher-Militant' [trans. Sebastián Touza], in Coté, Mark, et al. (eds.) (2007) *Utopian Pedagogy: Radical Experiments Against Neoliberal Globalization*, Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, pp.186-200

Conley, Verena Andermatt (1993) 'Eco-Subjects' in *Rethinking Technologies*, Conley, V.A (ed.) Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp.77-91

Conley, Verena Andermatt (1997) *Ecopolitics: The Environment in Poststructuralist Thought* London: Routledge

Conley, Verena Andermatt (2006) 'Borderlines', in *Deleuze and the Contemporary World*, Buchanan, I and Parr, A (eds.) Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp.95-107

Conley, Verena Andermatt (2008) 'Of Rhizomes, Smooth Space, War Machines and New Media', in *Deleuze and New Technology*, Poster, M and Savat, D (eds.) Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp.32-44

Conley, Verena Andermatt (2012) *Spatial Ecologies: Urban Sites, State and World Space in French Cultural Theory* Liverpool: Liverpool University Press

Coole, Diana and Frost, Samantha (eds.) (2010) *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency and Politics* Durham and London: Duke University Press

Cooley, Heidi R. (2008) 'Ecologies of Practice', *Journal of Visual Culture*, Vol.7, No.3, pp.267-276

Coolidge, Matthew and Simons, Sarah (eds.) (2006) *Overlook: Exploring the Internal Fringes of America with the Center for Land Use Interpretation* New York: Metropolis Books

Coté, Mark, Day, Richard J.F. and de Peuter, Greig (eds.) (2007) *Utopian Pedagogy: Radical Experiments Against Neoliberal Globalization*, Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press

Counihan, Carole and Penny Van Esterik (eds.) (1997) *Food and Culture: A Reader* London: Routledge

Cox, Geoff, Haq, Nav and Trevor, Tom (eds.) (2010) *Concept Store No.3: Art, Activism and Recuperation Spring 2010* Bristol: Arnolfini

Crang, Mike and Thrift, Nigel (eds.) (2000) *Thinking Space* London: Routledge

Cresswell, Tim (1996) *In Place, Out of Place: Geography, Ideology and Transgression* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

Cronon, William (1992) *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* New York and London W.W. Norton & Co.

Cronon, William (ed.) (1997) *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* New York and London W.W. Norton & Co.

Crosby, Alfred W. (1986) *Ecological Imperialism: the Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900 Cambridge*: Cambridge University Press

Cruz, Teddy (2012) 'Democratizing Urbanization and the Search for a New Civic Imagination', in Thompson (ed.) (2012) *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art From 1991-2011* New York: Creative Time and Cambridge MA: MIT Press, pp.56-63

Cupers, Kenny and Miessen, Markus (eds.) (2002) *Spaces of Uncertainty* Wuppertal: Verlag Muller + Busmann

Curtin, Deane and Heldke, Lisa (eds.) (1992) *Cooking, Eating, Thinking: Transformative Philosophies of Food* Bloomington: Indiana University Press

Dant, Tim (2004) *Materiality and Society Maidenhead:* Oxford University Press

Dean, Tacita and Deller, Jeremy (eds.) (2005) *Place* London: Thames and Hudson

Debord, Guy (2002) [1967] *The Society of the Spectacle* trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith New York: Zone Books

Debord, Guy (2008) *A Sick Planet* Oxford: Seagull Books

DeLanda, Manuel (1997) *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History* New York: Zone Books

DeLanda, Manuel (1998) 'Meshworks, Hierarchies and Interfaces', in Beckmann, J. (ed.), *The Virtual Dimension: Architecture, Representation and Crash Culture* New York: Princeton University Press pp.274-285

DeLanda, Manuel (1999) 'The Nonlinear Development of Cities', in *Eco-Tec: Architecture of the In-Between* New York: Princeton University Press, pp.22-31

DeLanda, Manuel (2006) *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity* London and New York: Continuum

DeLanda, Manuel (2006) 'Space: Extensive and Intensive, Actual and Virtual', in *Deleuze and Space*, Buchanan, I and Lambert, G (eds.) Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp.80-88

DeLanda, Manuel (2008) 'Deleuze, Materialism and Politics', in *Deleuze and Politics*, Buchanan, I and Thoburn, N (eds.) Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp.160-177

Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Felix (1986) [1975] *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (trans. Dana Polan) Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Felix (1984) *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* trans. Robert Hurley et al. London: Athlone

Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Felix (1996) [1987] *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (trans. Brian Massumi) London: Athlone Press

Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Felix (1994) *What is Philosophy?* (trans. Graham Burchell and Hugh Tomlinson) London and New York: Verso

Demos, T.J. (2012) 'Art after Nature' in Artforum April 2012 pp.191-197

Demos, T.J. (guest ed.) (2013) *Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology Third Text*, Vol 27, Issue 1, Jan 2013

Descola, Philippe and Palsson, Gisli (eds.) (1996) *Nature and Society: Anthropological Perspectives* London: Routledge

De Sola Morales, Ignasi (1995) 'Terrain Vague' in *Center Vol.14: On Landscape Urbanism,* Almy, D (ed.) (2007)*,* Austin: Center for American Architecture and Design and University of Texas pp.108-113

Deutsche, Rosalyn (1996) *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* Chicago, Ill.: Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts; Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press

Dicken, Peter (2002) 'Trading Worlds', in *Geographies of Global Change: Remapping the World*, Johnston, R.J., Taylor, Peter J., and Watts, Michael J. (eds.) Oxford: Blackwell Publishing pp.43-56

Doherty, Claire (2004) *Contemporary Art from Studio to Situation* London: Black Dog Publishing

Doherty, Claire (ed.) (2009) *Situation: Documents of Contemporary Art* Cambridge, Mass. and London: Whitechapel Art Gallery and MIT Press

Dorrian, Mark and Rose, Gillian (2002) *Deterritorialisations…Revisioning: Landscapes and Politics* London: Black Dog

Dovey, Kim (1999) *Framing Places: Mediating Power in Built Form* London: Routledge

Dovey, Kim (2009) *Becoming Places: Urbanism/Architecture/Identity/Power* London: Routledge

Dovey, Kim and Polakit, Kasama (2006) 'Urban Slippage: Smooth and Striated Space in Bangkok', in *Loose Space: Possibility and Diversity in Urban Life* Franck, K.A and Stevens, Q (eds.) London: Routledge, pp.113-131

Ehrlich, Ken and Labelle, Brandon (eds.) (2002) *Surface Tension: Problematics of Site* Los Angeles: Errant Bodies

Enwezor Okwui et al (eds.) (2002) *Documenta (11th: 2001: Democracy Unrealized: Documenta 11, Platform 1* Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz

Evans, Jessica and Hall, Stuart (1999) *Visual Culture: The Reader* London: Sage Publications

Ferguson, Francesca (ed.) (2006) *Talking Cities: The Micro-politics of Urban Space* Basel: Birkhauser-Publishers for Architecture

Ferguson, Russell (ed.) (1998) *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object 1949-1979* Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art

Flammang, Janet A. (2009) *A Taste for Civilization: Food, Politics and Civil Society* Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press

Flórida, Marisa (2009) 'Vacant Lots: The Integrated Impropriety' in Ganz and Silva, *Lotos Vagos: Ocupações Experimentais / Vacant Lots: Experimental Occupations* Belo Horzonte. BR: Instituto Cidades Criativas ICC, pp.93-97

Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo and Latitudes (eds.) (2008) *Greenwashing. Environment: Perils, Promises and Perplexities* Torino: The Bookmakers Ed.

Foucault, Michel (1972) *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith) London: Tavistock Publications

Foucault, Michel (1980) [1972] 'Questions of Geography', in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, Gordon, C. (ed.) New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf pp.63-77

Foucault, Michel (1989) 'An Ethics of Pleasure', in *Foucault Live: Interviews 1966-1984* Lotringer, S. (ed.) New York: Semiotext(e) pp.257-274

Le Foundation Daniel Langlois pour L'art, Science et la Technologie (2007) 'Siraj Izhar and ECOS ecosXchange' [online] Available at: < http://www.fondation-langlois.org/html/e/page.php?NumPage=2078> [accessed 07/07/08]

Franck, Karen A (ed.) (2005) *Food + the City: [Architectural Design, Vol. 75, no.3, May/June 2005] London: Wiley-Academy*

Franck, Karen A and Stevens, Quentin (eds.) (2006) *Loose Space: Possibility and Diversity in Urban Life* London: Routledge

Frieling, Rudolf (ed.) (2008) *The Art of Participation: 1950 to Now* New York, London: Thames & Hudson

Friere, Paulo [1970] (1996) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, London: Penguin Books

Fuller, Matthew (2005) *Media Ecologies: Materialist Energies in Art and Technoculture* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press

Fuller, Matthew (2008) 'Acts of Letting and Creation', in *Manifesta 7: Companion* Budak, A et al (eds.) Milano: Silvana, pp.32-33

Gandy, Matthew (2002) *Concrete and Clay: Reworking Nature in New York City* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press

Ganz, Louise (2007) 'Empty Lots: Collective Action of Experimental Urban Ocupation', in *Urban Transformation* Ruby, l. and Ruby, A. (eds.) (2008) Berlin: Ruby Press, pp.89-95, [online], available at <http://www.holcimfoundation.org/Portals/1/docs/F07/WK-Inf/F07-WK-Inf-ganz02.pdf> [accessed 24/07/08]

Ganz, Louise (2008) 'The Sidewalk in Front of House: Expansion of the Domestic Life', in Ganz and Silva (2008) *Banquetes: Expansões do Doméstico / Banquets: Expanded Domesticity* Belo Horzonte. BR: Instituto Cidades Criativas ICC, pp.65-75

Ganz, Louise (2009) 'Vacant Lots in the Cities: Proposals for Free Use' in Ganz and Silva, *Lotos Vagos: Ocupações Experimentais / Vacant Lots: Experimental Occupations* Belo Horzonte. BR: Instituto Cidades Criativas ICC, pp.83-92

Ganz, Louise (2012) 'Temporary Kitchen - An Experience of Conviviality in the Jardim Canadá Neighborhood (trans.) [e-mail correspondence with author]

Ganz, Louise (2013) Interview with Louise Ganz conducted by author [e-mail correspondence with author 2008-2013]

Ganz, Louise and Silva, Breno (2005) 'Lotos Vagos: Ação Colectiva Ocupação Urbana Experimental / Vacant Lots: Collective Action of Experimental Occupation' in *Espaços Colaterais / Collateral Spaces* Campos, A et al Belo Horzonte. BR: Instituto Cidades Criativas ICC, pp.26-44

Ganz, Louise and Silva, Breno (2008) *Banquetes: Expansões do Doméstico / Banquets: Expanded Domesticity* Belo Horzonte. BR: Instituto Cidades Criativas ICC

Ganz, Louise and Silva, Breno (2009) *Lotos Vagos: Ocupações Experimentais / Vacant Lots: Experimental Occupations* Belo Horzonte. BR: Instituto Cidades Criativas ICC

Garo, Isabelle (2008) 'Molecular Revolutions: The Paradox of Politics in the Work of Gilles Deleuze', in *Deleuze and Politics*, Buchanan, I and Thoburn, N (eds.) Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 54-73

Gell, Alfred (1998) *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* Oxford: Clarendon Press

Genosko, Gary (ed.) (1996) *The Guattari Reader* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers

Genosko, Gary (2002) *Félix Guattari: An Aberrant Introduction* London and New York: Continuum

Genosko, Gary (2005) 'Prospects for an Trans-disciplinary Ecology', *Ecology and Artistic Practice* Symposium, paper presented at Royal Society of the Arts, 28th April

Genosko, Gary (2009) *Felix Guattari: A Critical Introduction* London and New York: Pluto Press

Goodchild, Philip (1996) Deleuze *and Guattari: An Introduction to the Politics of Desire* London: Sage

Goodman, David and Redclift, Michael (eds.) (1991) *Refashioning Nature: Food, Ecology and Culture* London: Routledge

Goonewardena, Kanishka et al (eds.) (2008) *Space, Difference, Everyday Life: Reading Henri Lefebvre* New York: Routledge

Gottlieb, Robert (2007) *Reinventing Los Angeles: Nature and Community in the Global City* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press

Graham, Janna (2011)'Between Pedagogy and a Hard Place: Thinking with Conditions', in O'Neill, P and Wilson, M (eds.) (2011) *Curating and the Educational Turn*, Amsterdam: Open Editions, DeAppel, pp.124-139

Green Platform: Arte, Ecologia, Sostenibilita = Art, Ecology, Sustainability (2009) Firenze: Centro di Cultura Contemporanea Strozzina, Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi: Moleskine

Griffin, Tim (chair) et. al (2005) 'Remote Possibilities: A Roundtable Discussion on Land Art's Changing Terrain', Artforum, Summer 2005, pp.289-95

Grosz, Elizabeth (1995) *Space, Time and Perversion* London: Routledge

Grosz, Elizabeth (ed.) (1999) *Becomings: Explorations in Time, Memory, and Futures* Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press

Grosz, Elizabeth (2001) *Architecture from the Outside; Essays on Virtual and Real Space* Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press

Grosz, Elizabeth (2005) *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power* Durham and London: Duke University Press

Guattari, Félix (1987) 'Cracks in the Street', *Flash Art*, 135, pp.82-85

Guattari, Félix (1992) 'Space and Corporeality: Nomads, Cities, Drawings' in *Semiotext(e)/Architecture*, Zeitlend, H (ed.) New York: Semiotext(e), pp.118G1-125G8

Guattari, Felix (1993) 'Machinic Heterogenesis' in *Rethinking Technologies*, Conley, V.A (ed.) Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp.13-27

Guattari, Félix (1995a) 'On Machines', in *Complexity: Architecture/Art/Philosophy,* Benjamin, A (ed.) London: Academy Editions, pp.8-12

Guattari, Félix (1995b) *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-aesthetic Paradigm* Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press

Guattari, Félix (1995c) *Chaosophy* New York: Semiotext(e)

Guattari, Félix (1996a) 'Subjectivities: For Better or Worse' (trans. S. Thomas), in *The Guattari Reader*, (ed.) G. Genosko Oxford: Basil Blackwell pp.193-203

Guattari, Félix (1996b) *Soft Subversions* New York: Semiotext(e)

Guattari, Félix (2000) *The Three Ecologies* London: Athlone Press

Haarmann, Anke (2009) 'Nature-Culture: A Political Collective' in Harrmann and Lemke (eds.) (2009) *Culture/Nature: Art and Philosophy in the Context of Urban Development* Berlin: JOVIS Verlag, pp.67-77

Haarmann, Anke and Lemke, Harald (eds.) (2009) *Culture/Nature: Art and Philosophy in the Context of Urban Development* Berlin: JOVIS Verlag

Hacking Ian (1999) *The Social Construction of What?* Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press

Hajer, Maarten A (2001) *In Search of New Public Domain: Analysis and Strategy* Rotterdam: NAi Publishers

Halsey, Mark (2006) *Deleuze and Environmental Damage: Violence of the Text* Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing

Halsey, Mark (2007) 'Molar Ecology: What can the (Full) Body of an Eco-Tourist Do?' in Hickey-Moody, A and Malins, P (eds.) *Deleuzian Encounters: Studies in Contemporary Social Issues* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan pp.135-150

Haraway, Donna (1988) 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective', *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 3. (Autumn, 1988), pp. 575-599

Haraway, Donna (1991) *Simians, Cyborgs and Women* London: Routledge

Haraway, Donna (1994) 'A Game of Cat's Cradle: Science Studies, Feminist Theory, Cultural Studies', in *Configurations* 1, pp.59-71

Haraway, Donna (1997) *Modest Witness @ Second Millennium: FemaleMan Meets Oncomouse* London: Routledge

Hardt, Michael (2008) 'Production and Distribution of the Common: A Few Questions for the Artist', [online], available at: <http://www.skor.nl/article-4111-en.html>, [accessed 11/11/2009]

Hardt, Michael (2009) 'Politics of the Common', [online], available at <http://www.zcommunications.znet/ViewArticlePrint/21899>, [accessed 11/11/2009]

Hardt, Michael and Negri, Antonio (2002) 'Globalisation and Democracy', in Enwezor, O, et. al. (eds.) *Documenta_platform 1: Democracy Unrealized*, Documenta (11th 2002 Kassel Germany), Ostifildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, pp.323-336

Hardt, Michael and Negri, Antonio (2009) *Commonwealth* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press

Harvey, David (1990) *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* Oxford: Basil Blackwell

Harvey, David (1996) *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell

Harvey, David (1996) 'Contested Cities: Social Process and Spatial Form', in *The City Reader* LeGates, RT. and Stout, F (eds.) London: Routledge, pp.230-237

Harvey, David (2000) *Spaces of Hope* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press

Harvey, David (2011) *The Enigma of Capital and the Crises of Capital* London: Profile Books

Harvey, David (2013) *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* London and New York: Verso

Harrison, S., Pile, S., Thrift, N. (eds.) *Patterned Ground: Entanglements of Nature and Culture* London: Reaktion Books

Haydn, Florian and Temel, Robert (eds.) (2006) *Temporary Urban Spaces: Concepts for the Use of City Spaces* Basel: Birkhauser

Hayward, Tim (1995) *Ecological Thought: An Introduction* Cambridge: Polity Press and Blackwell Publishers

Held, David (2006) *Models of Democracy* Stanford, California: Stanford University Press

Herzogenrath, Bernd (ed.) (2008) *An [Un]Likely Alliance: Thinking Environment[s] with Deleuze and Guattari* Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Herzogenrath, Bernd (ed.) (2008) *Deleuze/Guattari & Ecology* Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan

Hess, Charlotte and Ostrum, Elinor (2007) (eds.) *Understanding Knowledge as Commons: From Theory to Practice* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press

Heynan, Nick, Kaika, Maria and Swyngedouw, Eric (eds.) (2006) *In the Nature of Cities: Urban Political Ecology and the Politics of Urban Metabolism* London: Routledge

Hickey-Moody, Anna and Malins, Peta (eds.) (2007) *Deleuzian Encounters: Studies in Contemporary Social Issues* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

Himmelsbach, Sabine and Volkart, Yvonne (eds.) (2008) *Okomedien Ecomedia Okologische Strategien in der Kunst Heute / Ecological Strategies in Today's Art* Oldenburg: Edith-Russ-Haus fur Medienkunst

Hinchliffe, Steve (1999) 'Cities and Natures: Intimate Strangers', in Allen, John, Massey, Doreen and Pryke, Michael *Unsettling Cities: Movement/Settlement* London: Routledge, pp.141-185

Hinchliffe, Steve (2007) *Geographies of Nature: Societies, Environments, Ecologies* London: Sage

Hinchliffe, Steve and Whatmore, Sarah (2009) 'Living Cities: Towards a Politics of Conviviality' in White and Wilbert (eds.) *Technonatures: Environments, Technologies, Spaces and Places in the Twenty-first Century* Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press, pp.105-122

Hlavajova, Maria, Winder, Jill, Choi, Binna (eds.) (2008) *On Knowledge Production: a Critical Reader In Contemporary Art* Utrecht: BAK; Frankfurt am Main: Revolver

Hodder, Ian (2012) *Entangled: An Archaeology of the Relationships Between Humans and Things* Oxford and Malden MA.: Wiley-Blackwell

Holcim Foundation (2007) Urban_Trans_Formation: Working Group B Informal urbanism - Between Sanctioned and Shadow Orders [online] available at <http://www.holcimfoundation.org /Forum/shanghai-2007/Workshops/informal-urbanism-between-sanctioned-and-shadow-orders> [accessed 09/10/2008]

Holert, Tom (2009) 'Art in the Knowledge-based Polis', in *e-flux journal*, No.3, February 2009

Höller, Christian (2007) 'The Abandonment of Democracy: An Interview with Jacques Ranciere', in Schollhammer, G (ed.) *Documenta Magazine No.1-3, 2007, Reader*, Documenta (12th 2007 Kassel Germany), Cologne: Taschen

Holmes, Brian (2008) *Unleashing the Collective Phantoms: Essays in Reverse Engineering* Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia

Hoffman, Jens and J, Jonas (2005) *Perform* London: Thames and Hudson

Hou, Jeffrey (ed.) (2010) *Insurgent Public Space: Guerrilla Urbanism and the Remaking of Contemporary Cities* London: Routledge

Hubbard, Phil (2006) *City* London: Routledge

Hubbard, Phil, Kitchin, Rob and Valentine, Gill (eds.) (2004) *Key Thinkers on Space and Place* London: Thousand Oaks and Sage

Hughes, Jonathan and Sadler, Simon (eds.) (1999) *Non-plan: Essays on Freedom and Change in Modern Architecture and Urbanism* Oxford: Architectural

Huleileh, Serene (ed.) (2007) *The Sharjah Biennial 8, Still Life: Art, Ecology and the Politics of Change* Sharjah: Museum of Art

Illich, Ivan (1986) H2O and the Waters of Forgetfulness London: Marion Boyars

Ingold, Tim (2000a) 'Making Culture and Weaving the World', in *Matter, Materiality and Modern Culture*, Graves Brown, P.M (ed.) London: Routledge, pp.50-71

Ingold, Tim (2000b) *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* London: Routledge

Institute of Seoul Studies (ISS), University of Seoul (2002) Cheonggyecheon ui yeoksawamunhwa (trans. Cheonggyecheon's History and Culture) Seoul Metropolitan Government Cheonggyecheon Restoration Project Headquarters

Izhar, Siraj (2006) 'Pebbles and Crumbs in Neo-liberal Space', [online] available at: <http://www.stalk.net/essays/Pebbles_and_crumbs_Siraj_Izhar.pdf>, [accessed 09/10/2008]

Izhar, Siraj (2007a) 'Parallel Processes and Cultural Ecosystems', in *Ambient Information Systems* [online] available at: <http://www.stalk.net/essays/ParallelProcesses_CulturalEcosystems _Siraj_Izhar.pdf>, [accessed 09/10/2008]

Izhar, Siraj (2007b) ' Algorithms for Utopia: An XYZ of Health and Wealth', in *Space Shuttle: Six Projects of Urban Creativity and Social Interaction, Belfast* Murrow, R and Mutschler, P (eds.) Belfast: PS²

Jameson, Fredric (2005) *Archaeologies of the Future* London and New York: Verso

Johnston, R.J., Taylor, Peter J., and Watts, Michael J. (eds.) (2002) *Geographies of Global Change: Remapping the World* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing

Kaika, Maria (2005) *City of Flows: Modernity, Nature and the City* London: Routledge

Kaye, Nick (2000) *Site-specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation* London: Routledge

Kastner, Jeffrey (ed.) (1998) *Land and Environmental Art* London: Phaidon

Kastner, Jeffrey (2011a) 'Art in the Age of the Anthropocene' in Kastner, J (ed.) *Nature: Documents of Contemporary Art* Cambridge, Mass. and London: Whitechapel Art Gallery and MIT Press, pp.12-19

Kastner, Jeffrey (ed.) (2011b) *Nature: Documents of Contemporary Art* Cambridge, Mass. and London: Whitechapel Art Gallery and MIT Press

Kepes, György (ed.) (1972) *Arts of the Environment* Henley: Aidan Ellis

Kester, Grant H. (2004) *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press

Kester, Grant H. (2005) 'Theories and Methods of Collaborative Art Practice' in *Groundworks: Environmental Collaboration in Contemporary Art* [online] available at: <http://www.grantkester.net/resources/Groundworks.pdf> [accessed 07/10/10]

Kester, Grant H. (2010) *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* Durham and London: Duke University Press

Kiendl, Anthony and Craig, Blanche (eds.) (2008) *Informal Architectures: Space and Contemporary Culture* London: Black Dog Publishing

Knechtel, John (ed.) (2008) *Food* Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press

Knechtel, John (ed.) (2009) *Water* Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press

Kossak, Florian, Petrescu, Doina, Schneider, Tatjana, Tyszczuk, Renata and Walker, Stephen (eds.) (2010) *Agency: Working with Uncertain Architectures* London and New York: Routledge

Kremer, Mark (2004) *See Seoul, Then Die: The FlyingCity Experience* [online], available at: <http://flyingcity.kr/text-eng/text.html>, [accessed 04/03/08]

Kunsthalle Fridericianum and Siemens Arts Program (eds.) (2005) *Collective Creativity / Kollektive Kreativität Frankfurt*: Revolver

Kwon, Miwon (2002) One *Place After Another: Site Specific Art and Locational Identity* Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press

Lacy, Suzanne (ed.) (1996) *Mapping the Terain: New Genre Public Art* Seattle: Bay Press

Latour, Bruno (1993) *We Have Never Been Modern* Hemel Hemptead: Harvester Wheatsheaf

Latour, Bruno (1999) *Pandora's Hope: an Essay on the Reality of Science Studies* Cambridge: Harvard University Press

Latour, Bruno (2004) *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy* Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press

Latour, Bruno (2004b) 'Why has Critique Run out of Steam?', in *Critical Enquiry*, 30, Winter 2004

Latour, Bruno (2005) *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* New York: Oxford University Press

Latour, Bruno and Hermant, Emilie (1998) *Paris Ville Invisible* Paris: La Découverte-Les Empêcheurs de penser en rond, trans. Liz Carey-Libbrecht '[online], available at: <www.bruno-latour.fr /virtual/index.html#> [accessed 02/04/07]

Latour, Bruno and Weibel, Peter (eds.) (2005) *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press; Karlsruhe, Germany: ZKM/Center for Art and Media in Karlsruhe

Law, J. and Hassard, J. (eds.) (1999) *Actor Network and After* Oxford: Blackwell

Leach, Neil (1997) *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory* London: Routledge

Leach, Neil (2004) *China* Hong Kong: Map Book Publishers

Le Bourhis, Jean-Pierre (2005) 'Water Parliaments: Some Examples', in Latour, B. and Weibel, P. (eds.) (2005) *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press; Karlsruhe, Germany: ZKM/Center for Art and Media in Karlsruhe, pp.482-485

Lefebvre, Henri (1991) *The Production of Space,* trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith Oxford: Blackwell Publishers

Lefebvre, Henri (2003) *The Urban Revolution* trans. by Robert Bononno, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

Lehmann, Steffen (ed.) (2009) *Back to the City: Strategies for Informal Urban Interventions: Collaboration Between Artists and Architects* Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz

Lemke, Thomas (2011) *Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction (Biopolitics: Medicine, Technoscience, and Health in the Twenty-first Century)* New York and London: New York University Press

Lippard, Lucy (1997) *The Lure of the Local: Sense of Place in a Multicentered Society* New York: The New Press

Lippard, Lucy (2006) 'Beyond the Beauty Strip', in Andrews, M (ed.) (2006) *Land, Art: A Cultural Ecology Handbook* London: RSA and Arts Council, pp.14-15

Lister, Nina-Marie (2007) 'Trashed Space' in *Trash*, Knechtel, J (ed.) Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press

Loftus, Alex (2008) 'Democratic Interventions into the Urbanisation of Nature' [online], available at: <http://www.artsite.org.uk>, [accessed 8/02/10]

Loftus, Alex (2009) 'Intervening in the Environment of the Everyday', *Geoforum*, 40(3), pp.326-334

Low, Setha and Smith, Neil (eds.) (2005) *The Politics of Public Space* London: Routledge

Luhmann, Niklas (1990) 'The Autopoiesis of Social Systems', in *Essays on Self-Reference*, Luhmann, N, New York and Oxford: Colombia University Press

Macnaghten, Phil and Urry, John (1999) *Contested Natures* London: Sage

Maharaj, Sarat (2002a) 'Unfinishable Sketch of 'An Unknown Object in 4D': Scenes of Artistic Research', in L&B Volume 18, p.39-58

Maharaj, Sarat (2002b) 'Xeno-Epistemics: Makeshift Kit for Sounding Visual Art as Knowledge Production and the Retinal Regimes', in *Documenta_11 platform 5: Exhibition Catalogue*, Enwezor, O (ed.) Kassel: Hatje Cantz, pp.71-84

Manacorda, Francesco (2007) 'Irreversibility, Dissipation, Chaos and Noise Machines' in Huleileh (ed.) *The Sharjah Biennial 8, Still Life: Art, Ecology and the Politics of Change* Sharjah: Museum of Art pp.56-60

Manacorda, Francesco (2009) *Radical Nature: Art and Architecture for a Changing Planet 1969-2009* London: Barbican Art Gallery and Koenig Books

Marras, Amerigo (ed.) (1999) *Eco-Tec: Architecture of the In-Between* New York: Princeton University Press

Mariani, Philomena (ed.) (1999) *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin, 1950's-1980's* New York: Queens Museum of Art

Massey, Doreen (1993) 'Power, Geometry and a Progressive Sense of Place', in Bird and Curtis (eds.) London: Routledge pp.59-69

Massey, Doreen (1997a) 'A Global Sense of Place', in *Reading Human Geography: The Poetics and Politics of Inquiry*, Barnes, T and Gregory, D (eds.) London: Arnold, pp.315-323

Massey, Doreen (1997b) 'Spatial Disruptions', in Golding (ed.) London: Routledge, pp.217–225

Massey, Doreen (1998) 'Power-geometries and the Politics of Space-time', Hettner-Lecture, Department of Geography, University of Heidelberg, Heidelberg

Massey, Doreen (2005) *For Space* London, Thousand Oaks, California: Sage

Matilsky, Barbara C (1992) *Fragile Ecologies: Contemporary Artists' Interpretations and Solutions* New York: Rizzoli

Maturana, Humberto R. and Varela Francisco J. (1980) *Autopoiesis and Cognition: The Realisation of the Living* Dordrecht: D. Reidel

Maturana, Humberto R. and Varela Francisco J. (1992) *The Tree of Knowledge: The Biological Roots of Human Understanding* Boston and London: Shambhala

McNay. Lois (1996) 'Michel de Certeau and the Ambivalent Everyday', in *Social Semiotics*, Vol.6, No.1 pp.61-81

Michael, Mike (2000) *Reconnecting Culture, Technology and Nature (From Society to Heterogenity)* London: Routledge

Miessen, Marcus, Basar, Shumon (eds.) (2006) *Did Someone Say Participate?: An Atlas of Spatial Practice* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press

Miles, Malcolm (1997) *Art, Space and the City: Public Art and Urban Futures* London: Routledge

Miles, Malcolm (2004) *Urban Avant-Gardes: Art, Architecture and Change* London: Routledge

Miles, Malcolm (2005) *Urban Utopias: The Built Environment and Social Architectures of Alternative Settlements* London and New York: Routledge

Miles, Malcolm and Hall, Tim (2003) *Urban Futures: Critical Commentaries on Shaping the City* London: Routledge

Miller, Daniel (ed.) (2005) *Materiality* Duke N.C.: Duke University Press

Minton, Anna (2009) *Ground Control: Fear and Happiness in the Twenty-First Century City* London: Penguin

Mirzoeff, Nicholas (ed.) (1998) *The Visual Culture Reader* London and New York: Routledge

Mol, Annemarie and Law, John (1994) 'Regions, Networks and Fluids: Anaemia and Social Topology, in *Social Studies of Science: 24,* pp.641-71

MOM (Morar de Outras Manieras) Baltazar, Ana P. Kapp, Silke and Morado, Denise (2008) 'Architecture as Critical Exercise: Little Pointers Towards Alternative Practices', *Field: A Free Journal for Architecture, Vol.2, 1, Oct 2008*

Moreira, Inês and Caló, Susana (2012) Devir Menor: Presentation of the Project [online], available at: <http://www.devirmenor2012guimaraes.com/devir-menor-english-version/> [accessed 18/01/13]

Mörtenböck, Peter and Mooshammer, Helge (2008) *Networked Cultures: Parallel Architectures and the Politics of Space* Rotterdam: NAi Publishers

Morton, Timothy (2007) *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press

Morton, Timothy (2010) *The Ecological Thought* Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press

Moyer, Twylene and Harper, Glenn (eds.) (2011) *The New Earthwork: Art, Action, Agency* Hamilton, N.J.: isc Press

Murdoch, Jonathan (1997) 'Towards an Geography of Heterogeneous Associations', in *Progress in Human Geography*, 21, pp.321-337

Murdoch, Jonathan (1998) 'The Spaces of Actor-Network Theory', in *Geoforum,* 29, pp. 357-374

Murdoch, Jonathan (2006) *Post-structuralist Geography: A Guide to Relational Space* London: Sage Publications

Nicholas Le-Strat, Pascal (2007) 'The Ecosophy of the Project', trans. by Millay Hyatt, [online], available at: <http://www.le-commun.fr/index.php?page=the-ecosophy-of-the-project>, [accessed 23/07/09]

Nicholas Le-Strat, Pascal (2007) 'Micrology/Micrologies' trans. by Millay Hyatt, [online], available at: <http://www.le-commun.fr/index.php?page=micrology-micrologies>, [accessed 23/07/09]

Nicholas Le-Strat, Pascal (2008) 'Temporary Occupations' trans. by Millay Hyatt, [online], available at: <http://www.le-commun.fr/index.php?page=temporary-occupations>, [accessed 23/07/09]

Noble, Richard (ed.) (2009) *Utopias: Documents of Contemporary Art* Cambridge, Mass. and London: Whitechapel Art Gallery and MIT Press

O'Brien, Paul (1991) 'Art and Ecology, a New Orthodoxy', in *Circa*, no.60, Nov/Dec 1991, pp.18-25

O'Neill, Paul and Wilson, Mick (eds.) (2011) *Curating and the Educational Turn*, Amsterdam: Open Editions, DeAppel

Osborne, Peter (2005) 'Where is the Work of Art? Contemporary Art, Spatialisation and Urban Form' in Whittaker, Edward and Lanrum, Alex (eds.) (2007) *Nonsite to Celebration Park: Essays on Art and the Politics of Space* Bath: Bath Spa University Press, pp.13-32

Ostrom, Elinor. (1990) *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press

O'Sullivan, Simon (2005) *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari: Thought Beyond Representation* Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan

O'Sullivan, Simon and Zepke, Stephen (eds.) (2008) *Deleuze, Guattari and the Production of the New* London: Continuum

Papastergiadis, Nikos (2002) 'Traces Left in Cities' in Architectural Design: Poetics in Architecture No.156 pp.45-52

Papastergiadis, Nikos (2006) *Spatial Aesthetics: Art, Place and the Everyday* London: Rivers Oram Press

Papastergiadis, Nikos and Rogers, Heather (1996) 'The Parafunctional' in Stathatos, John (ed.) *Art and the City: A Dream of Urbanity* London: Academy Group, pp.76-86

Parr, Adrian (ed.) (2005) *The Deleuze Dictionary* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press

Parr, Adrian (2009) *Hijacking Sustainability* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press

Park Fiction (2003) *Park Fiction presents: Unlikely Encounters in Urban Space* Park Fiction (DVD originally shown in Documenta 11, 2003)

Park, Kyong/ ICUE (2005) *Urban Ecology: Detroit and Beyond* Hong Kong: Map Book Publishers

Pasternak, Anne and Ashford, Doug (eds.) (2006) *Who Cares* New York: Creative Time

Petcou, Constantin and Petrescu, Doina (2007) 'Acting Space: Transversal Notes, On-the-ground Observations and Concrete Questions for Us All', in atelier d'architecture autogérée and Peprav (eds.) (2007) *Urban Act: a Handbook for Alternative Practice,* pp.319-328

Petcou, Constantin and Petrescu, Doina (2010) 'Legacy Plus: International Dialogue Two – atelier d'architecture autogérée, Urban Catalyst and muf', talk presented at the Architecture Foundation, [3/3/2010]

Peran, Martí (ed.) (2008) *Post-It City: Ciutats Ocasionals / Ciudades Ocasionales / Occasional Urbanities* Barcelona: Centre de Cultura Contemporania, Diputació de Barcelona

Peran, Martí (ca.2008) 'Post-It City Project Aims' [online], available at: <http://www.ciutatsocasionals.net/englishEXPOCOWEB/objetivos.htm>,[accessed 31/09/10]

Petrescu, Doina (2002) 'Pl(a)ys of Marginality: Trans-migrants in Paris' in *The Hieroglyphics of Space: Reading and Experiencing the Modern Metropolis* Leach, N (ed.) London: Routledge, pp.260-270

Petrescu, Doina (2005) 'Losing Control, Keeping Desire', in Blundell-Jones, P., Till, J., and Petrescu, D. (eds.) (2005) *Architecture and Participation* London: Spon Press, pp.43-63

Petrescu, Doina (2007a) 'How to Make a Community as Well as a Space for It' [online], available at: <http://www.peprav.net> [accessed 28/01/2009]

Petrescu, Doina (ed.) (2007b) *Altering Practices: Feminist Politics and Poetics of Space* London: Routledge

Petrescu, Doina (2010) 'Gardeners of the Commons', in atelier d'architecture autogérée and rhyzom (eds.) (2010) Trans-Local Act: Cultural Practices Within and Across, pp.317-322

Pile, Steve and Thrift, Nigel (ed.) (2000) *City A-Z: Urban Fragments* New York and London: Routledge

Pollan, Michael (2003) *The Botany of Desire: A Plants-Eye View of the World* London: Bloomsbury

Potrč, Marjectica (2006) *Fragment Worlds* Como: Fondazione Antonio Ratti, Barcelona: ACTAR

Prost, Jean-François (2008) 'Adaptive Actions', in *Field: A Free Journal for Architecture, Vol.2, 1, Oct 2008*

Prost, Jean-François (ed.) (2009) 'Life after Architecture', in *Adaptive Actions* (UK Edition) Prost, J. F. Montreal: Adaptive Actions, London: SPACE pp.10-15

Purves, Ted (ed.) *What We Want is Free: Generosity and Exchange in Recent Art* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press

Rabinow, Paul (1990) 'Artificiality and Enlightenment: from Sociobiology to Biosociality' in *Incorporations* Crary, J and Kwinter, S New York: Zone Books pp.190-201

Rajchman, John (2001) *The Deleuze Connections* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press

Rancière, Jacques (2003) *The Politics of Aesthetics*, (unpublished lecture at Aarhus University, Denmark, September 2003), [online], available at: **<**http://www.16beavergroup.org/mtarchive/archives/001877.php> [accessed 12/02/10]

Rancière, Jacques (2004) 'Problems and Transformations in Critical Art', in Bishop, C (ed.) (2006) *Participation: Documents of Contemporary Art* Cambridge, Mass. and London: Whitechapel Art Gallery and MIT Press pp.83-93

Rancière, Jacques (2006) *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible* London and New York: Continuum

Rancière, Jacques (2009) *The Emancipated Spectator* London and New York: Verso

Rancière, Jacques and Höller, Christian (2007) 'The Abandonment of Democracy', in *Documenta Magazine No.1-3, 2007 Reader* Schollhammer, G. and Documenta (12th: 2007: Kassel, Germany) (eds.) Cologne: Taschen pp.449-465

Raunig, Gerald (2007) *Art and Revolution: Transversal Activism in the Long Twentieth Century* New York: Semiotext(e) / Active Agents

Rawes, Peg (2013) *Relational Architectural Ecologies* London and New York: Routledge

Read, Alan (ed.) (2000) *Architecturally Speaking: Practices of Art, Architecture and the Everyday* London: Routledge

Rendell, Jane (1999) 'Doing it, (Un)doing it, (Over)doing it Yourself: Rhetorics of Architectural Abuse', in *Occupying Architecture: Between the Architect and the User,* Hill, J (ed.) London: Routledge, pp.229-246

Rendell, Jane (2001) 'Heteropaths and Cannibals', [online], available at <http://www.janerendell.co.uk>, [accessed 12/01/07]

Rendell, Jane (2002) 'Surfacing', in *Realms of Impossibility: Water*, Lim, C.J and Lui, E (eds.) Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Academy

Rendell, Jane (2006) *Art and Architecture: A Place Between* London and New York: I.B. Tauris

Rendell, Jane et al (eds.) (2007) *Critical Architecture* London: Routledge

Rendell, Jane (2008) *'*Art's Use of Architecture: Place, Site and Setting' in *Psycho Buildings: Artist Take on Architecture*, Rugoff, R (ed.) London: Hayward Publishing pp.39-46

Robbins, Paul (2004) *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction* Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers

Rogoff, Irit (2000) *Terra Infirma: Geography's Visual Culture* London and New York: Routledge

Ronneberger, Klaus (2007) 'Bare Life or Just Existence?', in *Documenta Magazine No.1-3, 2007 Reader* Schollhammer, G. and Documenta (12th: 2007: Kassel, Germany) (eds.) Cologne: Taschen pp.263-274

Rugg, Judith (2010) *Exploring Site-Specific Art: Issues of Space and Internationalism* London: I.B. Taurus

Scholette, Gregory (2011) *Dark Matter: Art and the Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture* London: Pluto Press

Scotini, Marco and Zanfi, Claudia (eds.) (2003) *Going Public: Soggetti, Politiche e Luoghi / Politics, Subjects and Places* Milano: Silvana

Scott, Felicity D. (2010) *Architecture or Techno-utopia: Politics after Modernism* Cambridge MA: MIT Press

Seijdel, Jorinde (2008) *Art as a Public Issue: How Art and its Institutions Reinvent the Public Dimension* Rotterdam: NAi Publishers

Serres, Michel (1995) *Genesis* (trans. J. Geneviève and J. Nielson) Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press

Serres, Michel (1995) *The Natural Contrac*t (trans. E. MacArthur and W. Paulson) Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press

Serres, Michel and Bruno Latour (1995) *Conversations on Science, Culture, and Time* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press

Shellenberger, Michael and Nordhaus, Ted (2004) 'The Death of Environmentalism: Global Warming Politics in a Post-Environmental World', [online], available at <www.thebreakthrough.org/images/ Death_of_Environmentalism.pdf>, [accessed 02/04/07]

Silva, Breno (2009) 'Of Political and Poetic Coincidences in Vacant Lots' in Ganz and Silva, *Lotos Vagos: Ocupações Experimentais / Vacant Lots: Experimental Occupations* Belo Horzonte. BR: Instituto Cidades Criativas ICC, pp.99-107

Simmons, I.G. (1979) *Biogeography: Natural and Cultural* London: Edward Arnold

Simmons, I.G. (1989) *Changing the Face of the Earth: Culture, Environment, History* Oxford: Basil Blackwell

Smith, Neil (1984) *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space* Oxford: Blackwell

Smith, Stephanie (ed.) (2001) *Ecologies: Mark Dion, Peter Fend, Dan Peterman* Chicago: The David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art and the University of Chicago

Smith, Stephanie (2005) *Beyond Green: Toward a Sustainable Art* New York and Chicago: Smart Museum of Art and Independent Curators International

Soper, Kate (1995) *What is Nature?: Culture, Politics and the Non-human* Oxford and Cambridge, Mass. : Blackwell

Spaid, Sue (2002) *Ecovention: Current Art to Transform Ecologies* Cincinnati, OH: Contemporary Arts Center

Steel, Carolyn (2008) *Hungry City: How Food Shapes Our Lives* London: Chatto & Windus

Stimson, Blake and Sholette, Gregory (eds.) (2007) *Collectivism After Modernism: The Art of Social Imagination After 1945* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

Suderberg, Erika (ed.) (2000) *Space, Site, Intervention: Situating Installation Art* Minneapolis; University of Minnesota Press

Swyngedouw, Erik (2004) *Social Power and the Urbanization of Water: Flows of Power* Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press

Swyngedouw, Erik (2006a) 'Circulations and Metabolisms: (Hybrid) Natures and (Cyborg) Cities' in *Science as Culture*, 15/2, pp.105-121

Swyngedouw, Erik (2006b) 'Metabolic Urbanization: The Making of Cyborg Cities' in Heynen, Nik, Kaika, Maria and Swyngedouw, Erik (eds) (2006) In the Nature of Cities: Urban Political Ecology and the Politics of Urban Metabolism London: Routledge pp.21-40

Swyngedouw, Erik (2009) 'The Antinomies of the Postpolitical City: In Search of a Democratic Politics of Environmental Production' in *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, Vol.33.3, Sept. 2009, pp.601-20

Swyngedouw, Erik and Kaika, Maria (2000) 'Fetishizing the Modern City: The Phantasmagoria of Urban Technological Networks' in *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 24, pp.120-138

Swyngedouw, Erik and Kaika, Maria (2003) 'The Environment of the City…or the Urbanization of Nature', in *A Companion to the City* Bridge, G and Watson, S (eds.) Oxford: Blackwell, pp.567-580

Thompson, Nato (2008) *Experimental Geography: Radical Approaches to Landscape, Cartography and Urbanism* Brooklyn, N.Y.: Melville House, New York: Independent Curators International
Thompson, Nato (ed.) (2012) *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art From 1991-2011* New York: Creative Time and Cambridge MA: MIT Press

Thompson, Nato and Sholette, Gregory (eds.) (2004) *The Interventionists: Users' Manual for the Creative Disruption Of Everyday Life* North Adams, Mass.: MOCA Publications

Thrift, Nigel (1996) *Spatial Formations* London: Sage Publications

Thrift, Nigel (2004) 'Summoning Life' in Envisioning Human Geographies, Cloke, P. Crang, P. Goodwin, M. (eds.), London: Arnold, pp.81-103

Till, Jeremy (2009) *Architecture Depends* Cambridge, Mass and London: MIT Press

Tomic, Goran (2001) 'The Sheltering Connection: The Work of Marjetica Potrč', in *Trans>: Art, Cultures, Media 9/10* Passim INC.

Ünsal, Deniz (ed.) (2005) *International Istanbul Biennial (9th: 2005: Art, City and Politics in an Expanding World: Writings from the 9th International Istanbul Biennial* Istanbul : Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts

Viegener, Matias (2006) 'Fallen Fruit', in *Cabinet*: *A Quarterly of Art and Culture: Fruits*, Issue 23

Whatmore, Sarah (2002) *Hybrid Geographies: Natures, Cultures, Spaces* London: Sage

Whatmore, Sarah and Thorne, L (1997) 'Nourishing Networks: Alternative Geographies of Food', in *Globalising Food: Agrarian Questions and Global Restructuring* Goodman, D and Watts, M (eds.) London: Routledge, pp.211-224

White, Damian F. and Wilbert, Chris (eds.) (2009) *Technonatures: Environments, Technologies, Spaces and Places in the Twenty-first Century* Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press

Whittaker, Edward and Lanrum, Alex (eds.) (2007) *Nonsite to Celebration Park: Essays on Art and the Politics of Space* Bath: Bath Spa University Press

Williams, Raymond (1993) [1973] *The Country and the City* London: Hogarth Press

Williams, Raymond (1990) 'The City and the World', in *What I Came to Say* Belton, N Mulhern, F and Taylor, J (eds.) London: Hutchinson Radius

Winstanley, Gerrard b.1609 (2006) *The Law of Freedom: and other Writings* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Yong-Seok, Jeon (2001) 'Agenda of the Urbanism Group FlyingCity', [online], available at: <http://www.foruma.co.kr/workshop/eng/fly1.htm>, [accessed 02/04/07]

Yong-seok, Jeon (2007) 'Drifting Producers' in Art and Social Change: A Critical Reader Bradley, W. and Esche, C. (eds.) (2007) London: Tate Publishing and Afterall, pp.396-377

Zizek, Slavoj (2008) 'Censorship Today: Violence or Ecology as the New Opium of the Masses? [online], available at: <http://www.lacan.com/zizecology1.htm>, [accessed 18/01/12]

Zizek, Slavoj (2011) *Living in the End Times* London and New York: Verso