

## A Critical Posture of Performance

At first I will present a project “Productores” that I have been working with artist Karolina Kucia in the southern region of Andalucía. Our project focus on the production of food in the region, where for instance the 30% of strawberries consumed in EU is being produced. The food production in the region is a massive scale industry where vegetables and fruits are produced in plastic houses, and colloquially called as ‘plasticulture’. The people working in these plastic houses are mostly immigrant workers from the North-Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa and Eastern Europe. The conditions to work are often horrid – the temperature in the plastic house may rise up to 80 degrees celcius in the summertime. Our project consist of collecting stories from these people through workshops and interviews, in order that we aim to trace conjunctions between food, production and migration.

The possible end product will be a short fiction film shot in the area of Sierra Alhamilla and Tabernas in Andalucía. Tabernas is famous for being a used in several film settings, for instance by Sergio Leone. We aim to shoot this film on the abandoned film set used in *Games of Thrones* and *Exodus* by Ridley Scott, and many others. The written script is going to be based on the material gathered from the workshops and interviews.

However, instead of being a straightforward film production our working process aims to focus on an issue, which is the representation of migrants, crisis and possible victimization of the migrant workers. In this, we want to focus on the issue of an event in performance and film, as well. To start with, I will contextualize this problem.

In her quite recent book *Artist at Work* Bojana Kunst proposes that one of the options for resisting the ever-expanding forms of capitalist exploitation would be that artists should do less or do nearly nothing. Not unlike the famous adage by the character of Bartleby in the novel by Herman Melville: I would prefer not to. Throughout the book, her analysis of the relationship between the artist and late capitalism seem to revolve around the possibility of revolt and overcoming the contradictions that capitalism is producing. However, this kind of progressive reading of the context, seem to me ill-fitted for producing a critical stance towards the processual nature of late capitalism. Still, she makes a clear point, that the artist as an intellectual has lost an autonomy, and has become more of a facilitatory, or in regards Paolo Virno, a virtuoso, where her performance finds its

fulfilment in the action itself, with the presence of others.<sup>1</sup> Her vision is bleak, as it is for any other post-fordist critique that has been circulating for the past few decades.

The forms of late capitalism are not based on dialectical progress, but on mutation and expansion. We are living truly ‘deleuzian’ times. But capitalism has survived only because it mutates and expands, and it creates new axioms, which capture the material, emotional and affective flows, and allocate functions to these flows. In order to survive, capitalism is “forced to mutate,” writes Yann Moulier Boutang.<sup>2</sup> Here, knowledge and artworks gain value through their performance and application, based on the number of its *multiplication* and the *sharing* rate among the people who were part of the process.<sup>3</sup> The cycle of production comes into operation only when it is required, but once the job has been done, the cycle dissolves back into networks and flows, writes Maurizio Lazzarato.<sup>4</sup> In the end the adage of capitalism – against Bartleby — would be, that “it simply makes sense.”

Capitalism is a milieu, where heterogenous and chaotic forces emerge, and then some of these forces are axiomatized and made to function. The same concerns also subjectivation processes, or *the articulation of collective speech*, that subjectivation is a collective process in the first place – the very same way as all processes in the late capitalism, writes Félix Guattari.<sup>5</sup> I want to bring this up here, because he argues specifically for this nature of late capitalism that is not representational, but axiomatic. But a collective is not only a relation, but a ‘modal institution’. The question is about the process of subjectivation, and not on the subject, where a subject is connected with *action* in the world, but subjectivation is mostly a function.

To move little bit away from the schizoanalytic system of ‘partial subjectivities’ of Guattari, I regard the subjectivation is but only an effect of the real, and it is a practice.

---

1 Virno 2004

2 Moulier Boutang 2011, 36

3 Pasquinelli 2008, 97

4 Lazzarato 1996, 137

5 Guattari 1984, 43

Following Virno, performance of the virtuoso is the image of the cognitive labourer, where the “product is inseparable from the producer,” as Christian Marazzi writes, or where the fulfillment is found in the activity, itself — it is *praxis*.<sup>6</sup> Then, all work does not need to have an end product, but only combine action and intellect. I regard that this action and activity is bound with the possible and the World. It is always a reactionary force, and deals with the world and its positions. The action, like Virno points at the orator, is always towards appearance, representation and reproductions. The action creates images — the images of the Real, the Victim, the Other, the Body, and so on. Curiously the possibility of an alternative is never radical enough.

I regard that the possible is bound with the last instance of economy, and furthermore the positions in relation with hegemony, revolt and exploitation. The possible is like an image of the real, where the real takes form in reality resembling the possible. The world relates with the possible, which is always limited and negated. The world is a given possibility, which is abstract and composite relation, which has only *possible* solutions and options. The critique of neoliberal capitalism is therefore needed to be a critique of the economy in the last instance. The capitalism is determined in the last instance of economy, but not the Real, writes François Laruelle.

In these perverse conditions of the late capitalism determined by the economy, the artist as an intellectual and the philosophers position themselves in relation with the victim. But this, is particularly the problem we have with our project with the migrant workers also. François Laruelle asks

“What happens to the Victim who has not had the time or the unlikely courage to resist? Philosophy forgets her, evidently; she does not emerge, she is not interesting [...] the Victim must let out a sigh that the philosopher can inscribe in his system.”<sup>7</sup>

What, then, could practice or performative of non-philosophy give for this situation? First of all, practice do not enter the labyrinth of protest and vengeance, Laruelle writes, but practice destroy representations – also the representation of the victim. Practice is immanent and determined in-the-last-instance by the victim. In this sense practice is also radically utopic and uchronic, Laruelle argues.

---

6 Marazzi 2001, 81

7 Laruelle 2015, 87

The situation is in crisis and catastrophic for the intellectual working with overcoming the hegemony, which is the intellectual of action. But it is not so, for the determined intellectual, as Laruelle calls it, because practice works with what is close by, and determined by the victim. However, the victim is not a subject, and cannot be approached by humanist philosophy, because victim=X. It is not sufficient for the signature of the Other. Instead of perceiving the victim as the recto-verso of the intellectual, which sanctions the actions of the intellectual and philosopher, Laruelle proposes the ‘method of the worst’. It is the

“only method that still remains available for us if we are to hope for a salvation and not identify ourselves with the unfathomable psychology of dictators and tyrants” where we may explore “all the possibilities of struggle,”<sup>8</sup>

but in human condition, which is not humanist, but where the human is never an essence or an idea, but a radically immanent. It is an actualization of that last instance of the Real, or the Victim=X.

In relation with migration, and the condition of work in Andalusía, I can recognize the tone, how Saidiya Hartman writes on the slavery and the victim as ‘stranger’, which

“is the X that stands in for a proper name, it is the placeholder for the missing, that mark of the passage, the scar between native and citizen. It is both and and a beginning. It announces the disappearance of the known world and the antipathy of the new one.”<sup>9</sup>

In the documentary films by Sylvain George, where he followed the lives of several asylum seekers in the ‘Jungle’ of Calais, we can see how his approach is far from objective. The film material is heavily aestheticized with high-contrast black and white editing, and the speed of cutting is not usual. Clearly, he has represented the victim, but also let them speak with their own voice, and to express their wit, anger and analysis of their situation. It is not a non-philosophical film-project, if there even can be any, but I would recognize the practice of film not determined by the instance of economy, but the victim not represented in terms of sufficient reason, also.

---

8 Laruelle 2015, 81

9 Hartman 2008, 8

In the cut of the frames and editing we are not confronted with economic or informalistic editing, but rather with different duration, which to my regard is similar with the documentary films made by Chantal Akerman, — especially the film *D'Est, From the East* (1993). It is that particular decision *not to decide*, or to practice what is at close by, and not aim for an *action* in the film. Both Akerman and George use the tool of film in order not to create positions between the victim and the viewer to create action, but because they both put on hold the decision on economy of frame, they also let the film be determined by other instance — the victim or the Real, maybe.

Thus, our aim in the project is not to build narratives of resistance, but to recognize the determination in the last instance of economy, and how it takes place in shooting, performing and editing. Though, it is not the same adage, as 'I would prefer not to'. We need to recognize how the practice may not be *philosophizable* in sufficient terms, that it is not sufficient.

The practice is cloning, and not making connections, knots, plaits or stitching. It is not that practice would be interested of the Real, or represent it in language. The Real is presupposed, but the performance does not resemble the real. There is no *vérité* in the performance as practice. However, the presupposition of the intellectual is that the performance is saying something about the Real, the other, the victim and existence. These presuppositions build up the economy of thought. In cloning as practice, we are not looking at the meaning of performance, or what it can do — or what a body can do. The cloning practice is the cloning of the performance itself, not as action but as practice determined in the last instance of the victim. Not to work less, but what practice with what is close at hand, immanently and not aiming for transformative actions.