

A play at playⁱ

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We can propose *what if we let go of being [artists]?* as a praxis of institutingⁱⁱ that, departing from some given problems - the crisis of hegemony and the precariousness of existence – tries to consider itself a collective subject in the course of its own action. In other words, it is a *subject under construction* during a *work in progress*. In such an attempt the bodies remain open, traversed by contingency, unable to speak the language of their action directly. All they do is to accompany the event with their praxis, to rewrite it as a test, an attempt or an approximation. The work ceases to be a manageable and controllable object - and therefore identifiable, attributable and repeatable -, in order to be proposed as an open situation. From the *production of the work* we go to the *work as production*ⁱⁱⁱ of experimental processes of coexistence that test enunciation devices and forms of articulation of the protest.

What seems relevant to me is not so much the event that took place at *La Casa Encendida*, as the process of its preparation and articulation: What questions did it stimulate? What tensions did it go through? What tools did it activate? What practices did it slip on? What questions did it turn into performatives during the course of its action? To address these issues I have taken four cuts, four events that crystallize some aspects that I would like to point out in relation to praxis of instituting.

Bodies that meet each other

what if we let go of being [artists]? was woven around a meeting-based methodology. To *meet* is not to *reunite*, in the sense of being added — to join the one — nor to project — to trust the future — to meet does not have a unified or transcendent purpose. Any encounter is sensitive to a mis-encounter. Getting to know each other, talking, moving and touching produces differences. The science of the encounter is brought into play by understanding those differences as a potentiality.

The first encounters of *what if we let go of being [artists]?* served the core group to draw the methodology and share the initial artifice. Extending the meeting required some kind of framework: a formalization. Although the decision could subsume the meeting in a few ways defined a priori, we needed an object of conversation and a methodology that allowed us to challenge others. So we propose *what if we let go of being [artists]?* around a question^{iv}. The question was proposed as a framework of experimentation that not only invited to react to a problem, but to intervene in it and

displace it to other areas of life. In this sense, the question worked as a space for collective interrogation, where to suspend or put in brackets certain figures that stressed neoliberal subjectivity. It was a machine of destitution that crystalized in diverse practices, among them the *[Ex]citationes*^v. The *[Ex]citationes* proposed a game of displacement and composition on the question of the meeting. They were objects that socialized and displaced the question, stretching figures and positions around the sustainability of the forms of life in progress.

Impossible bodies

An image: Thirty bodies in a circle around an empty center. What do they want to announce? What do you expect to appear? They want to do something together but the consensual scene, due to repetition, seems to have lost the ability to articulate a common action. Instead of the coveted common action, the empty center becomes dense, resistant and returns the image of the impossibility of building a community. It is the scene of dissidence: there is no agreement. That was the first finding and perhaps the most powerful: *what are we playing at?*

What are we playing at?^{vi} was an unlikely encounter between unknown agents. For a week, it brought together researchers, theorists, artists, managers and other cultural agents in Valencia to address the tensions between creative economies, games and community. The meeting proposed a week of living and working together to produce knowledge and practices, with a full program of activities, project presentations and discussions. It was a kind of ephemeral experimental community that, for a few days, had been built around a question. That was the official framework, but the experience was disturbing.

The tension of the bodies with respect to the *constituent action* manifested itself with the same intensity as in the squares. The bodies have to be impossible, they have to deny themselves at their edges, become secondary, unreachable, elusive before any production device that tries to realize their powers, organize their desires, expropriate their sensitive modes of existence.

Bodies in brackets^{vii}

Another image: It's eleven in the morning and a neighbor stops in front of the theater. A barricade of bodies blocks the way. The boldest ones seek the sun with their cheeks. The rest talk distractedly while weaving figures that do not seem to have any use. What are they weaving? The neighbor is curious. "They are a soft resistance", they say. She doesn't understand anything, but they seem

peaceful.

Any dissident gesture starts from a certain negativity, from a challenge to the world as we know it. Contrary to the constant mobilization of our productive capacities, the brackets work as a tool for emptying out the saturated centers of our existence. It is an invitation to play in the peripheries. *Bracketing the world* is suspending the belief in the reality in which we are installed. It is a methodological commitment that opens the critical possibility of envisioning ourselves as subjects of experimentation, subjects under construction.

When questioning the subject's sovereignty in the world, the invitation issued by *what if we let go of being [artists]?* to dislodge the labor link between life and the artistic scene was not reduced to an act of total destruction, or an act of absolute creation. To leave the figure of the artist vacant, putting it in brackets, was a way of «starting up an emptying power as a tactic and operating according to a transversal strategy. To let go of what reality forces us to be [...] is to draw a demarcation between what one wants to live and what one is not willing to live^{viii}»

The Beta Occupation of *what if we let go of being [artists]?* that took place in *Pradillo Theater* was one of the expressions of that *bracketing*, a suspension that opened the opportunity to share the different lines of approach to the problem we were posing: How to live up to what was happening to us? How to think the articulations between art, politics and life as the potentiality of a common challenge that already implies us?

Perhaps we should learn to measure the craft in relation to the power of the challenges they pose. That implies assuming that our questions are more powerful than the answers that silence them. But it also implies interrupting the logic of power and the sense of progress, assuming that the assault on heaven is a descent into the worldliness of bodies and their simplest practices. In this sense, much of the experiences we developed during that week slipped over the everyday. They were gestures of a reproductive aesthetic —living together, conversing, eating, sleeping, knitting, dancing, watching a movie, etc.— an aesthetic in progress of becoming that dealt with care and affection, the conditions of a common existence.

So *to be in brackets* not only functioned as a gesture of emptying out, it also opened a space of inaction where we could reappropriate the coordinates of being together that did not appeal to patriarchal productivism, nor to the organization of recreation time. In any case, it questioned direct action as the only transformative way, claiming instead a patient subject, receptive and open to the

sensitive experience of the world. A passionate willingness to let oneself be affected that frees the experience of pragmatism and its relationship with work and production. "Let's go slowly because we go far," they said in the squares.

Bodies that matter

Every attempt has its crisis. Crisis as an opportunity, crisis as a catastrophe. Some people believe that everything depends on how the crisis is handled, as if the crisis were an object thrown in time, a chronicle without a place. But sometimes the crisis is the space in which we move, a spatiality that develops calendars and organizes the bodies according to their own logic.

In our case, the inscription of the gesture in *La Casa Encendida* was always a crisis, an abyss of the choreographic movement. After all, nothing is easier for the institution than to conform and assume any gesture and to present it as an organized choreography. However, part of the challenge was to open a hole in the scene to avoid the closing of the representation. Contrary to the *staging the choreographic* we proposed *the current scene* as a moving device that displaced positions, socialized the production and opened spaces for conversation about horizontality and transversality. I say it without heroism because I am convinced that the representation will not be knocked down in a single assault. However, the challenge forced us to think another way about the borders of the community, the openness of the scene and its anonymous powers. In this sense, the value of *what if we let go of being [artists]?* does not place in itself - in the method to achieve something - but rather "in the movement that forces us to take, in the mismatches it forces us to produce, in the searches that force us to perform".^{ix}

- i The original title in spanish was “Una obra en obras”
- ii In this way “praxis” is a mode of production of the subject by self-alteration of the actor in the course of the action: a conditioned self-transformative activity. See Dardot (2015).
- iii Marcelo Expósito. Walter Benjamin, productivist. Bilbao: Consonni, 2013.
- iv The question of the meeting was taken from the text of What if we cease to be (citizens) ?. Santiago López Petit What if we stop being (citizens)? Manifiesto for the unemployment of the order, in the old mole nº 272, 2010, pp. 58-67. Published on 09-07-2011 at www.espaientblanc.net.
<http://www.ub.edu/catedrafilosofiacontemporanea/sites/all/images/files/Petit.pdf> [last accessed: 06/07/2016]
- v The “excitement” is a tool inspired by the Pressentiments, a practice of social agitation and thinking of the Espai en Blanc collective.
- vi The meeting was organized by Oscar Cornago and Carolina Boluda within the Research Project: «Social Imaginaries II: the idea of action in post-industrial society. Theory, analysis and documentation of scenic practices ».
- vii Santiago Lopez Petit. La movilización global. Breve tratado para atacar la realidad. Madrid: Traficantes de sueños, 2009.
- viii Santiago Lopez Petit. *Y si dejamos de ser (ciudadanos)? Manifiesto por la desocupación del orden*, en El viejo topo nº 272, 2010, p.63. Published on 09-07-2011 at www.espaientblanc.net.
<http://www.ub.edu/catedrafilosofiacontemporanea/sites/all/images/files/Petit.pdf> [last accessed: 07/06/2016]
- ix See Vercauteren, David; Müller, Thierry; Crabbé, Oliver. Micropolitics of the groups. Madrid: Dream Traffickers, 2010. p.51.