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New Preface to Art and Revolution, 2017

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Art and Revolution was written between 2001 and 2005, as a research component of the European project *republicart*, enveloped by the friendly dissemblage of our institute, eipcp, which at the time was still in its early development, and as a philosophical habilitation at the University of Klagenfurt, where Peter Heintel and the reviewers made possible fairly unconventional access to the academic apparatus. At the same time the book completes an implicit trilogy on questions of political art. In *Charon. Eine Ästhetik der Grenzüberschreitung* [Charon. An Aesthetics of Border Transgression] (1997–1999), a critique of the autonomy of art was meant to provide the foundation for a theorization and affirmation of interventionist art based on the example of the group WochenKlausur. The short volume *Wien Feber Null. Eine Ästhetik des Widerstands* [Vienna February Zero. An Aesthetics of Resistance] (2000), written during the spell of the Viennese movement of 1999 and 2000 against a pending coalition of the conservative People's Party and the far-right Freedom Party in Austria borrows formally but also with appropriated passages from Peter Weiss' renowned antifascist book, in search of a language in which the unsettled multitude of the Viennese resistance at the

turn of the millennium could be not only described, but also affectively actualized. The present third volume was ultimately planned as a philosophical approach to activist artistic practice, and it became a historical investigation of the relationship between art and revolution in "the long twentieth century" from the viewpoint of now-time – a present becoming, influenced by minoritarian histories of transversal resistance since the late nineteenth century and an extended here and now in and around Vienna.

Far more than a scholarly work, the book is an affirmation of new constituent practices, written in the raging middle of the social movements of these years. The alter-globalization movement was as much the book's point of departure, as were the discourses around constituent power and multitude (with Antonio Negri) and critiques of political representation from Félix Guattari, Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault to the Zapatistas and John Holloway's "changing the world without taking power" and on to queer-feminist positions. Discursive artistic spaces like the Depot, the Kunsthalle Exnergasse and the Viennese Academy of Fine Arts, the journals *Kulturrisse, Anschläge* and *Grundrisse* or the web-journal *transversal*, *Empire* reading groups and political-theoretical debates on mailing lists, the presence of the most interesting international activists and authors in talks and discussions – all this had made Vienna into a place where social movements and political theory production creatively fused for some years. Around 2004 and 2005 another activist experience was added to this, the movement of the precarious, for which Vienna would once again play a special role, this time as part of a composite of dozens of European cities called Euromayday.

With respect to a central question for *Art and Revolution*, namely of the forms of concatenation of artistic and revolutionary machines, the antiracist, queerfeminist and nomadic practice of

Publix Theatre Caravan served as an exemplary backdrop. Embedded in the translocal noborder movement, it left traditional variations of the relationship between art and politics behind and probed the questioning and extension of boundaries at many different levels. To closely follow and theoretically condensate its development, often marked by leaps and breaks, from experimental theatre projects in an occupied house to various climactic moments of the alter-globalization movement in Vienna, Salzburg, Genoa or Strasbourg seemed then and still seems more adequate than a broad depiction of similar practices during the same period.

Art history, art criticism and aesthetics happily remain silent on issues of political art and the political aspects of specific artistic practices, and this is even more so the case with respect to the forms of concatenation of art and revolution. Despite the many great figures of art history who were involved in revolutions, the dangerous crossings between artistic and political activism are frequently trivialized, belittled or intentionally erased. The concatenation is not permitted here, art and revolution lose their machinic quality through the historicization and striation of art studies. While Gustave Courbet became more and more interested for cultural politics in the 1860s, art history only knows to speak of his artistic decline – completely blending out Courbet the revolutionary, the council member of the Paris Commune. When the Situationists played an important role in the prehistory of May 1968 in Paris, precisely this phase – in relation to the artistic/anti-artistic start in the 1950s or Guy Debord's films from the 1970s – remains unexamined. And when art machines and revolutionary machines give way to temporary overlaps in contemporary practices, they are perhaps briefly valued and marketed in the art scene, but they do not get taken up as transversal practices in the canons of academic disciplines.

In our contemporary experience of molecular social movements, but also in the minoritarian histories of marginal historiography, there is a multiplicity of forms of the relationship between the two machines. The combination art/revolution is not a bizarre exception, but rather a recurring figure throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, if under various signs and in distinct shapes. But what exactly happens when revolutionary machines meet art machines, when for a certain time overlapping zones develop? What occurs along the line of flight of art *and* revolution? And above all: What is the quality of this concatenation? In order to conceptually distinguish the multiplicity of forms, *Art and Revolution* proposes four modes as provisional narrowings of how revolutionary and art machines relate to one another: sequential concatenations of temporal succession, negative concatenations of incommensurable juxtaposition and opposition, hierarchal concatenations of (self-determined) superiority and inferiority and transversal concatenations of flowing jumble. In this last form the art machines and the revolutionary machines begin to overlap not in order to incorporate one into the other, but rather to enter into a temporally limited, concrete relation of exchange. Of course, one could also examine practices of the other three modes for their transversality factor, for the quality of the mutual non-heteronomous permeation, to ask in which manner and to what extent revolutionary machines and art machines are intertwined.

The late 1990s and 2000s were decades of experimentation with and invention of transversal practices, which enabled ever new forms of machinic overlapping and became an impulse for growing discursive interest and theoretical debate, to the point that one of the most important theorists in the field, Brian Holmes, euphorically claimed activism to be the most important form of contemporary art. In these decades a transnational field of

transversal practices can be said to have developed, even if it was fragile, which was sometimes even imagined as hegemonic, but this latter characterization issued more from the bourgeois art apparatus, for which the delimitation and enclosure of art are still what is to be done, and sometimes, coming from this same place, it was instead strongly attacked as "political art," "bad art," "non-art."

Perhaps today Brian Holmes' question about the meaning of activism as artistic practice is less of interest than the diametrically opposed search for revolutionary modes of living and subjectivation, which with a conceptual borrowing from Foucault and Guattari can be provisionally accounted for with the concept of an ethico-asthetics of subsistence: incompliant ways of life, queer practices of care, new forms of living together. In *Art and Revolution* various traces of such practices of molecular revolution are also to be found, which in what follows are updated with view to recent developments in Spain, as it were, by way of taking up certain lines of interpretation of the Paris Commune in *Art and Revolution*.

Social Revolution

"We see that a certain kind of revolution is not possible, but at the same time we understand that another kind of revolution becomes possible, not through a certain form of class struggle, but rather through a molecular revolution that sets not only social classes and individuals into motion, but also a machinic and a semiotic revolution." (Guattari, *Desiderio e rivoluzione: intervista a Félix Guattari*, Squirilibri, Milan, 1977).

What exactly did Félix Guattari mean when in a 1977 conversation with the young media activist Franco Bifo Berardi he pointed out

that precisely in the impossibility of a certain kind of revolution another kind becomes possible? How might this difference be interpreted and updated forty years later? Does the possibility of this other form of revolution exist now as then? How can new forms of living together be established in the new forms of valorization and subservience of machinic capitalism, under conditions of an exacerbated global division of labor and growing political repression, colonial continuity and neocolonial exploitation? How, also, can revolution again become machinic, a veritable molecular revolution?

In Guattari's distinction first a critique of revolution appears, or of a certain kind of revolution, which in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries prevailed as a great and homogenizing paradigm. It is this, the linear-molar perspective of revolution, which orders the various components of the revolutionary machine along a timeline, making a period of resistance lead to the climax of a more or less violent uprising, which quasi naturally ends with the takeover of the state apparatus. In this paradigm the revolutionary streams of desire straighten out and limit themselves to fixation on an exclusive "bait": the state. The manifold nature of the revolutionary machine is reduced to the event of the uprising, its spatial and temporal asymmetries and asynchronies forfeit their uniquely many folding dimensions, the socially situated ecologies become lost in the canonized parameters of the classical theories of revolution.

In what seems to be precisely distinguishable in analytic terms as "two kinds of revolution" a difference is thereby signaled, which Marx and Bakunin notably both develop in their writings on the Paris Commune of 1871, between "political" and "social revolution." Political revolution would be the project of taking over the state apparatus, the handing over of state power from one

ruling class to the other, the restriction of revolution to the exchange of personnel and ideology: replacing the wrong people with the right people, the wrong content with the right content, thus not completely forming the state anew, but holding its form intact in order to deploy it in the spirit of the revolution, and thereby understanding the state apparatus as something that would be neutral and would only need to be operated well and democratically.

In the theory, the two aspects – the social and the political – are not necessarily set in opposition to or exclusive of one another, more as two halves of revolution. However, when the logic of political revolution prevails, it tends to repress social revolution, thus becoming not simply a half revolution but far less than that: When political logic places itself above social cooperation, it hollows out the social ecologies over time, brings its currents to a standstill, allows its practices of care to dry out. And even for a successful revolution that gives the same amount of attention to the social and economic as the more narrowly political aspects, the problem of structuralization, state apparatification and closure in and of the institution remains. So many revolutions, precisely the "great" revolutions – the French, the Russian – could hold up little against this terror of structuralization. Parties of the institutionalized revolution, apparatuses of the closure of revolution in the institutions, state apparatuses as the torture racks of social machines.

Whereas political revolution aims at taking over the institutional apparatuses, the music of social revolution initially plays on a very different terrain, that which with Guattari we can call machinic-social. It consists in collecting and assembling, inventing and composing sociality beyond and before the state. Social cooperation, social ecology, social-machinic enveloping will always

already have been there, underneath the radars of the apparatuses. It is a matter of supporting and expanding this enveloping sociality of social revolution and carrying it into the state apparatuses.

"The Commune was the definite negation of that State power, and, therefore, the initiation of the social Revolution of the nineteenth century," Karl Marx wrote in the first draft of "The Civil War in France," composed during the Paris Commune. And interestingly enough, Bakunin comes astoundingly close to this description of the revolutionary commune. In the reflections he wrote under the title "The Paris Commune and the Idea of the State," written around the same time as Marx's text, Bakunin understands social revolution antagonistically to political revolution, writing: "Contrary to the belief of authoritarian communists – which I deem completely wrong – that a social revolution must be decreed and organized either by a dictatorship or by a constituent assembly emerging from a political revolution, our friends, the Paris socialists, believed that revolution could neither be made nor brought to its full development except by the spontaneous and continued action of the masses, the groups and the associations of the people."

The Paris Commune was not a sudden insurrectionary event, emerging from nothing, a spontaneous filling of state power after the Thiers government fled to Versailles. It was the "definite negation of that State power" "the continued action of the masses," social revolution – a persistent, instituting, revolutionary machine with all its components of resistance, insurrection and constituent power. Years before the government fled and prior to the creation of the council of the Paris Commune in March 1871 the opposing powers had already begun to constitute themselves in Paris. In the crisis of the regime of Napoleon III, social unrest, strikes, and new forms of assembly spread over the second half of the 1860s. As

pressure from below led to the granting of the freedom of the press and of assembly, onrushes of exponential increase in assemblies set in from mid-1868 onwards, in which Parisians met one another in all possible places and began to develop an array of positions on very different questions: the critique of property, the level of residential rents, "the women's question," the creation and management of people's kitchens and much more. The heterogeneous social composition of the meetings, however, was not only the basis for the thematic diversity. Hundreds of assemblies with up to a thousand participants successively changed the social glue in the quartiers and transformed daily life and modes of living in Paris into an ecology of social revolution.

Initially this debate was enabled and extended in direct communication between the collected bodies, in the subsistential territory of the quartier and in concrete spaces of assembly. At the same time, with the lifting of censorship came a wild spread of the most various forms of media across the entire city: newspapers, political placards, fly-posters, bulletins, lithographies, publicly affixed caricatures, proclamations, and murals made their mark on the city space. And in a paradoxical turn the sounds, images, bodies, and words accelerated and slowed down, dispersed and collected in their movements through the city. This transformation of the urban space through an enormous extension of new forms of assembly and media determined the social envelopes anew and brought forth new social ecologies.

In 2011 a similar movement of assembly spread through a significantly larger geopolitical space, from Arab North Africa through the Occupy movement in the United States to later occupation movements in Istanbul, Yerevan or Hong Kong. The most sustainable development of social ecology, however, occurred in Spain, that is, in one of those European countries in which the

crisis had borne the most severe effects. Although this brings us to a European example, closer examination shows with clarity the manifold influences from beyond Europe on the movement, which was falsely branded as Indignados: not only the immediately preceding invention of new forms of protest in the "Arab revolution," the diverse Latin American movements, too, especially the Zapatistas, as well as the early experiences of left governments around the turn of the millennium were decisive for what has been happening in Spain since 2011. The nonviolent insurrection of May 15, 2011 (15M) occurred as a mobilization of youth in particular in almost all Spanish cities, as a direct consequence of a call to rally by Democracia Real Ya! that was primarily spread in digital media and which had the slogan "They call it democracy, but it isn't." From the large demonstrations something unexpected became more sustainable in most cities: "like in Tahrir, like in Tahrir!" was one of the choruses at the Puerta del Sol in Madrid. And "like at Tahrir Square" in Cairo the demonstrators stayed on and occupied the central square of their city, they started camps and the same thing happened in many cities in Spain. Not for a night, not for a week, not even for a month, but for longer, up to 90 days.

Thus the 15M movement, contrary to its name, was not simply the event of one day. No simple uprising, but a long-term, non-linear movement, with jumping connections and genealogical lines in all directions. The three components of the revolutionary machine were realized to a similar degree: forms of resistance that had condensed since the 2000s, especially in movements against precarity (Euromayday) and the housing crisis (V de vivienda), and which around the turn of the first decade of the millennium were revived through new influences, including the university occupations that took place across Europe or the Jasmine

Revolution in Tunisia; the event 15M, which integrated into a line of postnational insurrections and massive moblizations; and finally the manifold experiences of constituent power in the occupations and assemblies of the weeks, months, and years that followed.

The assemblies were here, too, places of invention. They could last a very long time, and the assembled were patient enough to not only endure this duration but also to bend it in a productive manner. Collective moderation, lasting care work, the further development of the specific sign language and the methodology of radical inclusion created for hundreds of thousands of people an intensive experience of self-organization in multiplicity. And when despite patience and new methods the assemblies came up against their limits, the social ecologies propagated into the technopolitical: social media, especially the appropriation of the Twitter monopoly for political action, and on the other hand for more experimental activisms in the invention of an alternative to Facebook, the network n-1.cc, which at its peak had over 40,000 users, allowed for a shift of physical and temporal coordinates: not only media or spheres of information and exchange of opinions, but the raging middles in which desires actually leave home and go out into the street, and further in a territory of the production of desire between that which was once distinguished as real and virtual. Bodies and machines running into one another, social envelopments by technological gadgets, temporary architectures, and the caring praxis of the camp.

Condividual Revolution of Care

Masculinist connotation of revolution and production on the one hand, feminized representation of revolution and reproduction on the other hand, so the dichotomy persists, as widespread as it is

stubborn, which influences many discourses of revolution. But in the work of the revolutionary machines such false abstraction dissolves. Not feminine representation or metaphor of that which is carried out in masculine conflicts: the revolution is not feminine, not masculine, it *becomes* revolution. It becomes *as* revolution, it comes *to* be revolution, queer-machinic manifoldness, molecular multitude. As in the Paris Commune, when the women filled the urban space, that emptied space, that public sphere as a hole, emptied by the war that rampaged around Paris, emptied by the move of the government to Versailles. When the women defended the canons of the national guard against the government troops, because they were there, because they filled the streets in the early morning, because the revolution occurs at that place where – as Rosa Luxemburg wrote about the Commune – domination is "abandoned by everybody else."

Domination abandoned, ownerlessness: urban spaces, streets, squares, abandoned administrations and government buildings, which can be occupied differently. While women in the Commune were excluded from the sphere of representative politics, denied active and passive rights of voting, they participated foremost in the re-functioning of those emptied, abandoned spaces of the city into spaces of care: now no longer only privatized spaces of social reproduction that is naturalized and devalued as female terrain where care is the private assistance of individuals. While care practice meant the production of sociality, the Commune was a condividual revolution of care.

An important success factor of the camps of the summer of 2011 rested in the fact that even as the occupations and assemblies in the various cities dissolved after a month, sometimes after three months, this did not mean they simply disappeared: they took on a new form, spread themselves out into the different parts of the city

and into mareas, or waves, in which people developed concrete concepts in various areas from health to education. With the slogan #tomaslasplazas thousands of assemblies were established in neighborhoods.

Already in 2009, the Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca – the platform for people affected by mortgages, or "PAH" – was started as a response to the rigid effects of the crisis: to negotiate with banks and official bodies, to delay evictions or block them through direct action, to attack the roll of the banks and finally to change the legal context. But the most important practice of the PAH was to start a process of exchange, of dividual mutual empowerment and condividual care, where hundreds of thousands of people in Spain had been pushed into radically individualized distress by the crisis. Against this economic, social and psychopathological individualization of the effects of crisis, PAH activists allowed territories of condividual care to emerge. In the platform's assemblies and actions, care was divided: con-dividual division as overcoming radical in-dividualization, self-blame with respect to indebtedness, the fear of eviction and loss of subsistential territories of inhabiting and living together.

The queer-feminist collective Precarias a la Deriva already named these new forms of care practice in the early 2000s with a term that, through a minimal reordering of letters, effectuates a turn away from the idea of sovereign individual citizenship (ciudadanía, from the Spanish ciudad for city) to cuidadanía (from the Spanish cuidado for care). Above all this untranslatable cuidadanía ("care-izenship") expresses the multitude of care relationships, which doesn't start with individuals and works condividually rather than individually, is not organized in a clientelistic or top-down manner, but also is not totalizing and communitarian. The condividuality of *cuidadanía* does not mean distribution, it does not

mean absorption into the community, but rather bearing collective responsibility without giving up singularity.

Molecular Revolution

Now when Guattari in the above citation speaks of another kind of revolution, in his texts from the 1970s and 80s he calls this other kind "molecular revolution." Molecularity is to be thought in many dimensions, certainly not reducible to the dualism micro-macro. In all these dimensions the molecular implies multitude, manifoldness, the many molecules that don't let themselves homogenize, but rather maintain their uniqueness in their concatenations. Molecular revolution comes from the interstices and works into the pores of daily life, from and into the molecules of modes of living.

If political revolution tends to overcode the state and therefore repress or lose sight of the social-machinic enveloping, this cannot simply be reversed with a disapproving claim that social machines would disregard the political, the institutional, the necessity for political organization. It is rather a matter of not understanding the form of the state, the form of the institutional apparatuses as neutral, and instead seeing them as necessarily changeable, and not universalizing questions of organization but always discussing these in situated terms. The initial implication is that when it comes to the question of government, not only the (nation-)state is to be regarded, the molar dimension of revolution, but rather the aim must also be to approach as closely as possible that which Marx called the local "self-government of producers." In the wake of the movement of assemblies and clubs in the years from 1868 to 1870 the call for local autonomy grew stronger and stronger, and with this the terrain of the city and its management, the municipal,

were of increasing importance. With view to a conservative national government and the constant danger of the re-establishment of the monarchy, the cities lent themselves as a place to test the Commune, starting from the quartiers, building on the new modes of living in the subsistential territories, to radically re-think the governing of the city. This happened in 1870-71 not only in Paris, but in a number of French cities. In this context, molecular revolution also meant instituting a multitude of revolutionary machines in cities and city districts, areas of manageable scope.

With this, however, we have to pose, as Guattari in *Desire and Revolution*, "the question of the relationship between the molecular revolution and that which is not molecular. Foremost this is about the relation to the state – which more or less continues to function, even if it is no longer the place of taking over power." Just when the state apparatus is no longer understood as the place of taking power, it becomes in all its dimensions a relevant factor that must be thought anew. Initially in the question of the form of organization of the movement itself, then in the necessary pluralization as "many state apparatuses" (overcoming the fixation on the nation-state), then in the radical transformation of its form. Today this also means questioning those often unexamined problematic aspects of representative democracy, expanding representation as far as possible, letting the state apparatus become orgic.

In Spain, a new left party entered the scene for the European elections of 2014. While this party, Podemos, first focused on the EU, and then more and more on the national space, concentrating on the parliamentary elections of 2015 and 2016, from the beginning of 2015 platforms and confluences were created in which the social movements around 15M, the PAH, the mareas and social centers set themselves up at the level of the city and city

administrations. With view to the June 2015 municipal elections in Spain, a municipalist movement from below was established that extended across the country. Despite various names (Barcelona en Comú, Ahora Madrid, Cádiz Si se Puede, Zaragoza en Común, Participa Sevilla, Málaga Ahora, etc.) and differing aims, these platforms were united in their reference to the principles and methods of the 15M movement and some other shared concepts: the question of debt, the re-municipalization of certain services, city planning that would work against the gentrification and touristification of Spanish cities, the guarantee of social rights, especially with respect to housing and education, orgic forms of representation and molecularization of the state apparatus. The way the municipalist movement relates to the municipalities cannot be described as a subject/object relation, as revolutionary subject that seizes possession of its object of desire. It is not a matter of taking over the vessels emptied through the hollowing-out of representative democracy, the corrupt parties, the bureaucracy. Instead it is a matter of changing the institutional form itself, the modes of subjectivation and instituent practices, which does not only begin after the takeover of the state apparatus but rather before and beyond linear notions of development.

In June 2015 a barely expected electoral success of the municipalist movements occurred, in A Coruña, Barcelona, Madrid, Zaragoza, Cádiz and several other cities, the confluences were able to take over government. With the election of Ada Colau in Barcelona, a pivotal activist of the PAH was made mayor. That became possible because Barcelona en Comú received 11 of the 40 mandates in the city parliament and thereby became the largest fraction. Yet before these astounding electoral successes a new institutionality had developed: Barcelona en Comú did not want to simply take over

the municipality after the election in June 2015 as a super-temporal container whose contents get taken over or switched out.

Alongside many assembles, micropolitical practices, and various actions, the platform also initiated a militant investigation amongst the employees of the city administration in Barcelona. The research questions pertained to the power relations among them, their labor relations, how the employees related to the city residents as well as to elected representatives, and the political structure of the municipality. The investigation revealed that contrary to the image of a city employee with a secure job and pension, the transformations of machinic capitalism and the precarization accompanying it had not spared the organization of work in the state apparatus.

Transforming the situation of general corruption and precarization first meant going back to the specific intellect, the "technical knowledge" of the city administration employees as experts: the ones who know the apparatus, who know how it functions, have a particular competence in its transformation. In the militant investigation, participants formulated documents, protocols and positions that were to serve as the content basis for changing their own activity and institutionality. The most important effect of the investigation was the flowing together of subjectivations that was set into motion precisely *between* identifiable actors such as Barcelona en Comú and "the administration."

Here lies the potentiality of the orgic state apparatus in molecular revolution. To invent and probe new instituent practices within the municipalist movements, there needn't be an uninterrupted functioning of the apparatus, even if it works in the service of city residents or believes itself to be up to good. More than this, revolutionary machines that do not close into their own structures,

but rather permanently produce breakdowns as well as breakthroughs, bifurcations as well as confluences. The molecular revolution moves with these revolutionary machines, as social enveloping, multitude of relationships of care, re-appropriation of the city.

Málaga, Summer 2017