

**A cultural policy of the multitude in the time of climate change: with an understanding that the multitude has no policy**

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**Declaration Page**

Declaration of Authorship I ..... (please insert name) hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date:

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## **Abstract**

The changing climate will globally force drastic changes in how people live. Globally, governance supports its own interests while the multitude everywhere bear the burdens that rest between such interests and climate vacillation. That the multitude is composed of those who everywhere precede and exceed governance, who are necessary to its constitution but don't necessarily need it, suggests that the multitude tautologically self-governs somehow through concepts. These concepts are things that have managerial and governmental faces in whose creation the multitude participates but may or may not like. This cultural study understands that by relating to each other and the earth through general capacities of sociality, humanity solidifies cultural ways of being human, and that these cultural ways are governing creations. This study thinks through the ways that culture, beside or beyond formal governance, can best support multitudinous human relations towards general livability in the time of climate change. The Barcelona-based Plataforma De Afectados Por La Hipoteca (PAH), an autonomous movement fighting for housing rights, serves as a means to model how social relations reorganize governance in the multitude's interest. Virno's refinement of Marx's theory of general intellect, and the even more general sociality suggested by Spinoza, describe the immediate social capacities demonstrated by the PAH. This study also works through the UK-based climate poetry journal, the Dark Mountain Project, to grasp issues attendant to climate and governance and cultural work. Culture is discussed anthropologically and art historically – critically discussing Hegel's conceptions of universal qualities in relation to feminist, post-colonial and autonomist Marxist theories, thereby suggesting ways for cultural workers to think through cultural forms and ways that support multitudinous being in variable relation to governance and the changing climate.

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## **Introduction**

### **Aim and structure of argument**

Climate change poses a threat to planetary survival, forcing individuals and groups to change the ways they live their lives. Human existence in this time of climate change is pinched between the variable, human-defined ways and laws for living, and the seemingly natural world that is so rapidly changing.<sup>1</sup> Because it is assumed that human governmental efforts will not adequately respond to these challenges,<sup>2</sup> the aim of this study is to contemplate in general terms how cultural work might adequately respond, with its adequacy evaluated in terms of its alignment with the common capacities of the multitude. As culture need not demonstrate affinity with any series of governing concepts or governance, or work to further articulate governmental efforts, this study asks in what ways cultural work can be done in the interests of the multitude's being. As multitude, people in general will be left exposed to the mess wrought by climate change and respond in some way. On the experiential social terrain, cultural work has the general capacity to facilitate the multitude's abilities to respond in and beyond these crisis situations.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to articulate the general ways and ends that cultural

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1 In other words, the situation of humanity is such that it is contingent to its own rules and the laws of nature. See Negarestani (2011) for a useful discussion of how situated contingency relates to human variability, and Foucault (1998) for a key discussion of variability in relation to cultural and social being.

2 Eric Swyngedouw (2010) argues that certain apocalyptic fears regarding climate change are normative because they develop imaginaries that become "an integral and vital part of the new cultural politics of capitalism." This study assumes that capitalist governance will fail to meet the challenges of climate change, and aims to support methods which embrace other ways of being outside of or besides capital that will have to emerge through the transformative experiences of the multitude, including the experience of fear becoming something else.

work meaningfully relates to this multitude's praxis.

This initial introduction describes the aim and structure of this study, then goes on to discuss a methodology and its justification. Following this is a more detailed discussion of the study's key terms, which allows for a deeper articulation of the project's position and argument within the wider literature and discourse.

This study understands that much of the existing cultural work on climate change<sup>3</sup> is aimed at critiquing, suggesting or organizing forms of governing culture and law, rather than responding to the general multitude's common ways of being and forming in relation to the changing climate; as this study aims to do. Law and cultural work are organized in relation to the social sphere; primarily to serve accountable interests. In this normative way, the multitude experiences climate change through cultural things as much as through nature— for this reason this study understands climate as a thing that is necessarily both natural and cultural.

That culture exists in relation to the multitude and does not just simply emerge from it allows this study to see a relation between the cultural and the social that mirrors the relation between governance and the multitude. The policy suggestions this study ends with are not the work of the multitude, rather, they are based upon observation and

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<sup>3</sup> Detailed further under in the study's definitions of climate, multitude and culture, this study recognizes the significance of T.J. Demos (2017), Davis and Turpin (2015) and the Haus Der Kulturen der Welt's Anthropocene Project's efforts as touchstone cultural responses to climate change. Primary governmental efforts, through the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change, are detailed in Chapter 2.

research on how climate change reaches through cultural work to impact the multitudinous ways of human organization, and how humans multitudinously reorganize themselves in relation to these changes in relation to culture in and over time.

The multitude has properties, but no policy as it has no unified voice and only the most general of shared interests; the multitude simply contains capacities and potentials to be in generally particular ways, and to be other than how it is. By attending to these capacities of self-organization, cultural work can support the multitude's way of being.

## **Method**

This thesis is anchored by the study of two distinct projects, chosen for the particular ways they illuminate how, in exchange within the cultural and natural world, the multitude lives over time. The first project, The Dark Mountain Project, is a UK-based poetry/arts journal and editorial group which claims that its work makes an exceptional cultural contribution regarding how people can live through climactic change. Dark Mountain members claim their work is indispensable for the consideration of life in the time of climate change because their editorial perspective accepts as inevitable the civilizational ravages of climate change; they suggest that with this foresight they can write about climate change's disruptions *avant la lettre*. In order to understand and evaluate their claims, this study considers Dark Mountain's creative contributions in relation to international governing bodies like the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and also other organizational, civilizational and theological (and as

such, cultural) underpinnings attendant to their own cultural contemplation. Ultimately, this study finds Dark Mountain to be open to the same kinds of critiques leveled at many Western projects; Dark Mountain's editorial line helps organize the governing concepts of socio-economic and political relations that produce inequality and environmental calamity. That is, though they claim otherwise, Dark Mountain works in favor of governing interests that leave the multitude dangerously exposed. Nevertheless, through an examination of the concepts and practical arrangements they need in order to appear culturally meaningful, particular things about climate, Western cultural governance and general cultural ways are discussed. Moreover, this discussion of the limits of Dark Mountain's conceptual relation to the multitude reveals particular ways this study must conceive of the multitude in order to address the space that governmental failure opens, as the multitude's exposure to a changing climate.

The Platform for People Affected by Mortgages (the PAH), a Spain-based social movement, is the second object of this study. By organizing among themselves in their cities while in contact with a broader movement, the PAH organizes against a socio-economic and political climate and the governing lines that have driven its members into bankruptcy, foreclosure and possible homelessness. Through participant observation with the Barcelona PAH organization, the study focuses on how its members' experiences lead people who once seemed to be culturally (legally, performatively, psychologically) locked within a set of behaviors, to free themselves from such arrangements through other cultural and social exposures (via conversations, images, procedures, behaviors) – and therefore institute different ways for themselves (as common humans) to be, within

and across the broader society. Formalized here in academic thought and writing, the activities of the Barcelona PAH serve as a model for some of the multitude's common organizational capacities.

Together, these two objects of study allow for an investigation of some ways that cultural work does and does not facilitate the capacities of the variable multitude in and over time. Contemplating differences between these two objects – the work of Dark Mountain Project is only seen at the end of its mostly hidden production, whereas the open praxis of the PAH is continually mediated within and across society – reveals ways that the multitude can relate to more or less abstract, intimate and less intimate cultural work. By discussing the ways in which culture impacts across the particularities and generalities of multitudinous difference – how culture operates intimately and as a completely foreign-seeming thing as general facts of what culture does in place and across history, the study is able to draw its conclusions about culture and the multitude.

### **Justification of the research methodology**

One motivation of this study is how the multitude's lives are and will be impacted by the effects of climate change. The polar caps are melting, the oceans are filling up with plastic and the sea levels are rising, species are being driven to extinction at an alarming rate as formerly sustainable ways of life are coming to an end– while governmental efforts seem to continue along as always in the favor of its own familiar ways. Thus, another motivation is fact of the seemingly blind continuation of this state of affairs that seems to organize all kinds of activities in the interests of the centers of capitalist

governance so that they may continue to operate as if unaffected by the world around it. Cultural thought is often enthralled by the clearly articulated lines that governing efforts provide even though these lines are only partially descriptive of the total human ways for being.<sup>4</sup> The fact of this enthrallment leaves disorganized many ontological and theological questions whose disarray exposes the multitude to further violence. While cultural thought that follows disciplinary lines addresses what governance directly orders, by identifying a praxis of the multitude which exceeds but is in relation to worldly and particular governance, this study aims to see how other ways of being beside governance can be supported. As discussed below, when referring to governance, this study means both the clearly articulated, top-down, often financed human projects and large scale seemingly natural forces and their general affects.

That is why both the PAH and Dark Mountain have been selected as objects of study – Dark Mountain for their writing about the inevitability of climate change and their (false) understanding of the limits of politics in relation to culture, and the PAH for how it can model, beyond the most formal of political or cultural ways, how people effectively respond to systemic, government-organized crisis. Both differ in their general approach to how humanity constitutes and is constituted by climate; the seemingly universal and abstract cultural management that Dark Mountain's practice demonstrates is more closely affiliated with governing logics than the PAH; despite how nature is the content of their work, Dark Mountain primarily operates with a concept that defines climate as something beyond of the human. The PAH, on the other hand, primarily addresses what has

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<sup>4</sup> Within this introduction and throughout this study, the facts of this enthrallment is primarily confronted through the discussion of Western cultural thought informed or reflective of Hegelian thought.

traditionally been understood as anthropocentric economic and cultural climate and demonstrate an immediate praxis of relating to ongoing problems and conflicts. The PAH expresses a disinterest in cultural politics while Dark Mountain's claims to not be political are based on their supposedly universal perspective – which, as will be established, stands well within the frame for cultural work attendant to the Western governmentality that greatly help constitute the climate crisis.

As such, though Dark Mountain's particular editorial concepts quickly reveal themselves to be lacking in relation to the goals of this study, they nonetheless serve as a useful frame through which to consider the political, organizational and theological ramifications of governance and governmental failure. When the examination of pertinent concepts that Dark Mountain helps explore is exhausted, the study pivots to other sources that helps complete the analysis.

As the term 'Anthropocene' suggests, this is an era when the human impact upon nature must be considered. The crisis that the PAH responds to is caused by financial mismanagement and not flooding, but there are strong justifications for focusing on this group in a study of responses to climate change. There are only particular differences between a housing crisis that is caused by finance or flood, and both have financial ramifications. Both causes for change force people from their homes. Climate change is an issue as much for the way we regulate ourselves in relation to the world as for the fact that the global average temperature is rising or that the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere

is increasing. Climate change results from the financialization of nature,<sup>5</sup> and climate change and its future effects of displacement have been worked into contemporary systems of financialization.<sup>6</sup> This study is interested in how people everywhere multitudinously experience climate change in particular and general ways regardless of governmental action (like climate's financialization), and the ways that cultural work might assist the multitude in their responses. Within particular situations, outside of power, the PAH has been able to bring about significant changes against powerful governing forces, thereby resituating practices of living that such forces try to disallow.

The PAH's success is partially due to how they alter common-sense understandings of the ways people should be allowed to live in this world. They provide insight into the ethic of how a cultural policy of the multitude might be culturally instituted beside multitudinous sociality rather than through state organization, in context in Spain and across difference in the wider world.

Actual embedded research with the PAH documents grassroots capacities for transformation to drive wider change as more than just a conceptual possibility. The multitude, common people, do effectively respond to crisis situations; the study's documentation of the PAH provides material for demonstration and study of their relatively successful efforts. Over the course of research, events hosted by Dark

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<sup>5</sup> Sassen (2014) looks at how contemporary nature/culture dispositifs of capital drive both greater dispossession and environmental destruction, while Moore (2015) describes this process over the *longue durée* of Western capital.

<sup>6</sup> This financialization is the See Leonardi (2017) and Beuret (2017) for accounts of how carbon trading contributes to climate destruction, and Klein (2008) on disaster capitalism.



Mountain were attended for possible inclusion into the project. These events were not process-oriented or situated beside community practice, rather they were singular affairs whose pre-production occurred behind closed doors and whose eventual proceedings supported the serial release of their journal. Like the words they print, Dark Mountain's events were meant for contemplation rather than action. Therefore, it was decided that this study should focus on Dark Mountain's printed work. The PAH, on the other hand, demonstrate in context how normal people come together in crisis, produce, and work beside cultural material to actually change the world in which they live. In relation to what could be a seemingly hopeless situation, they demonstrate one example of what in social and cultural organization can help the multitude drive cultural and political change.

### **Terminology**

The terminological discussion below highlights the ways in which properties contained within the terms "multitude", "culture", "climate", "policy", "governance" and "government" are accentuated for usage within this study. Through this process, the study's arguments are further refined in relation to contemporary debates regarding these terms. That this study is anchored toward the 'multitude', a thing that is defined in indeterminant relation to forms of governance, is of primary importance. Subsequent definitions are built upon the variable multitude that is often only definable by degree and in relation; as such, many of the study's concepts are understood to be in orbit around definitions rather than operating under strict definitional terms.

## Multitude

Most contemporary philosophical use of the term ‘multitude’<sup>7</sup> is based on the work of Baruch Spinoza; the multitude’s political nature is described within his *Political Treatise* (1677/1951) based on the metaphysical ontology he lays out in his *Ethics* (1677/2001).<sup>8</sup> According to Spinoza, the fact that people as individuals and common bodies are governed by their passions (and then reason) suggests that by definition they never totally transfer their rights to any government;<sup>9</sup> people reserve the right to be led by passion. Spinoza’s multitude is the one and many people whose being precedes and exceeds governance, whose being is needed for the composition of government, but for themselves require no particular form of it. Yet, because he understands that people cannot live without some form of law,<sup>10</sup> Spinoza’s political treatise describes his key political concerns. His inquiry involves the multitude as he recognizes that any state’s stability and the common happiness it might organize is contingent to the total collaborative process between it and the multitude that it governs.<sup>11</sup> Though Spinoza sees

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7 Some key reference points for contemporary debates around the multitude include Negri, Hardt and Negri (2004), Virno (2004, 2008), Balibar (2008), Read (2016) and Morfini (2018).

8 Balibar (2008 122) concurs.

9 “...if we weigh the matter aright, the natural right of every man does not cease in the civil state. For man, alike in the natural and in the civil state, acts according to the laws of his own nature, and consults his own interest.” (Spinoza 1953 Ch.3 Sec.3)

10 “For men are so situated, that they cannot live without some general law.” (Spinoza 1953 ch1 #3) Balibar (2008 56) echoes this interpretation.

11 “dominion may be duly established, it is necessary to lay solid foundations, to build it on; from which may result to the monarch safety, and to the multitude peace; and, therefore, to lay them in such a way, that the monarch may then be most independent, when he most consults the multitude’s welfare.” (Spinoza 1953 ch.6 sec.8)

nothing unnatural in human activity,<sup>12</sup> he posits that the state does wrong when it “suffers to be done, things which may be the cause of its own ruin” (1951 ch.4 sec.4); based on misunderstanding the capacities and interests of what it composes and in what ways and for whom it has been composed.

This is an ambiguity that this study embraces regarding the multitude – that it constitutes government for its own management without being definitionally constituted by it. This study sees the multitude as being in autonomous relation to any form of governance that it relates to; that is, while some in the multitude might seek to constitute some forms of government, the whole of the multitude will not be satisfied by the relation. The study agrees with Virno (1996 200) when he writes that the multitude, “shuns political unity, is recalcitrant to obedience” but disagrees when he says that it “never achieves the status of a juridical personage and is thus unable to make promises, to make pacts, or acquire or transfer rights.” This study simply suggests that the multitude does as it will in the time that it has.<sup>13</sup>

“We know that the multitude is opposed to the people, to the ‘one will.’ It would be a mistake, however, to believe that the multitude can dispose of the One as such.” (Virno 2008 42) This study is interested in the simple and indeterminately necessary relationship between the one and the many; and understands this ‘one’ in relation to the many

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12 See Spinoza (2001 chapter 1) for an elaborate proof of the natural existence of anything that humans can conceive.

13 This definition of the multitude relates to the concept with transindividuality and the capacity of subjectivity to transform itself and here relates to Read's (2016) understandings of the multitude.

particular and general governing forces in the world. In many but not all ways, this study is disinterested in the distinction Virno goes on to make between the people and the multitude, and how he ultimately qualifies the “one”.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, his initial qualifications are useful for subsequent discussions; “The ‘one of the many’ is not different, then, from the regularity that stimulates the behavior of the disoriented animal.” Here Virno suggests that the one provides routine and corrects behavior. Another way he defines it is as a “conglomerate of species specific faculties (verbal thought, cognitive aptitudes, imagination, the ability to learn, etc.) that the history of big industry has tossed onto center stage.” (41)

In that the multitude is an amorphous and transitional body<sup>15</sup> – without an analysis of what proper governance is, in some ways the total relationality of governed to governing would suggest that the multitude is always in a state of self-governance. Without a concept for what people should do or government should achieve, it would be difficult to see social organization as anything other than the way it should be. As Balibar (2008 122–123) says, for Spinoza “nature is also history: a history without purpose.” In one light, the multitude could be seen as varying in relation to any state of affairs purely as an

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14 He relates “the one” to the Marxian concept of the “general intellect”, a concept this study discusses in some detail in Chapter 3. But to discuss the nature of his characterization now distracts from the task of defining terms. The conditioning of political terms matter, as Virno agrees – “It is worth it here to make an observation about terminology: these political systems seem ‘irregular’ to theoreticians of sovereignty precisely because they provide an institutional expression for the regularity lying beneath the rules. For Hobbes, the ‘leagues’ and concourses are inconsistent in their application of (or eventually in their failure to apply) the current laws in force on the strength of the extra-juridical parameters that is the ‘common behavior of mankind.’” (Virno 2008 42)

15 In this way, the use of multitude has qualities of the pre-individual and transindividual; see Roberts (2010), Simondon (2012), Basso (2012) Read (2016).

effect of the cultural mediation they affected. In fact, Hegel is said to have criticized Spinoza's conceptualization of human developments because he saw Spinoza providing no tool to actually think through a praxis of ongoing human organizationality.<sup>16</sup> Balibar understands Spinoza differently, seeing that for Spinoza, reason provides perspective and guidance to manage and direct ongoing events.<sup>17</sup>

It is important to distinguish this study's conception of the multitude from one that conceives it as an essential actor within a political project written against Hobbes' shadow. Spinoza's multitude and the dominion they organize through common sense<sup>18</sup> and affective composition is often theoretically placed in opposition to Hobbes' "people" and their sovereign. Through legalistic logic, Hobbes (1651/1922) conceptualizes a commonwealth outside of nature and grounded in law. The law sets forth an "anthropological machine"<sup>19</sup> that transforms people into citizen-subjects, who transfer

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16 This is not to agree with Hegel, but rather to begin a discussion of his work as his thoughts are important for this study.

Macherey's (2011) *Hegel or Spinoza* analyzes Hegel's work in relation to its proximities to Spinoza's. He suggests that Hegel considered his own relation to Spinoza, and. Macherey suggests that Hegel misreads the implications of Spinoza's concept of how history develops from god's initial act of creation. Rather than a proper reading of how Spinoza articulates humanity's ongoing creative efforts, Macherey suggests that Hegel mistakenly highlights how Spinoza sees all being as a singular expression of god's initial creation of everything and that "according to his position in history, the philosophy of Spinoza is necessarily insufficient or defective." (212)

17 "By analyzing all the possible historical configurations of the 'dialectic; between reason and passion that structures the life of the City, we come to know human itself -- and thus, nature in general. But politics is the touchstone of historical knowledge. So if we know politics rationally -- as rationally as we know mathematics -- then we know God, for God conceived adequately is identical with the multiplicity of natural powers." (Balibar 2008 122--123.)

18 As discussed under the term policy, Spinoza understood that "common notions", or shared understandings contribute to the composition of human orders and projects.

19 See Popp-Madsen (2014 50)

their rights to the sovereign in order to maintain the peaceable functions of the state.<sup>20</sup>

Hardt and Negri (2004) and others endow the multitude with the task of overturning this bourgeois state of affairs that Hobbes conceptually establishes.<sup>21</sup>

Whereas the nascent bourgeoisie needed to call on a sovereign power to guarantee its interests, the multitude emerges from within the new imperial sovereignty and points beyond it. The multitude is working through Empire to create an alternative global society. Whereas the modern bourgeois had to fall back on new sovereignty to consolidate its order, the postmodern revolution of the multitude looks forward, beyond imperial sovereignty. The multitude, in contrast to the bourgeoisie and all other exclusive, limited class formations, is capable of forming society autonomously; this we will see, is central to its democratic possibilities. (xvii-xviii).<sup>22</sup>

This study endows the multitude with no destiny besides its possibilities to exist, and to instigate or participate in contextual, particular or general order or disorder. Moreover, it is this study's understanding that the multitude exists in relation to any government or

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20 According to Hobbes, people must accept their position in relation to the sovereign, which is unlike how Spinoza articulates how multitude can collaboratively can strives to embody social peace or let their structures collapse. Though much is made of the distinction, Spinoza clearly understands that not all choices made by the multitude are for hopeful reasons. "There are certainly some subjects of fear for a commonwealth, and as every separate citizen or in the state of nature every man, so a commonwealth is the less independent, the greater reason it has to fear." (Spinoza 1953 ch.3. sec.9)

21 Virno (2004, 2008) also writes about the opposition between Hobbes' people and Spinoza's multitude, while Balibar simply recognizes that Spinoza wrote with a knowledge of Hobbes' work.

22 The early 2000's popularity of Hardt and Negri's multitude-as-progressive-hivemind provided one *raison d'être* for the concurrent development of network technologies, and is viewed by this study as one of many governing concepts that might be impressed upon the multitude.

governing force, across place and time.<sup>23</sup> A cultural policy in relation to the multitude is meant to forward the multitude's own definitional capacities to compose among itself and through culture in relation to governing force.

## **Culture**

Culture relates to that grey area between the multitude and governing force. It is grey because it can be unclear where one element ends and the other begins. Culture is what is identified as the ways people are, and how they actively describe their being in the world, and their ways of relating through things in it. From his ethnographic work, Pierre Clastres (1977) defines culture as that which stands between people and the forces of the natural world. His Guarani informants understand nature as being powerful and as having the force of "coercion." Because of its capacity to coerce, human governmental force is included within the Guarani definition of nature. (34–35)

When Virno describes those "species specific faculties" (2010 41) mentioned above, he is referencing the tools that compose cultural comprehension of what has been thrown on this stage of human aesthesis by government and governance. Like the forces it encounters, what is cultural can be described as changing over time in relation to what the multitude of humanity encounters through whatever form, governmental or otherwise. In relation to the cultural, the "social" is constituted by the less formalized but ever-present particularities of human interaction; it is through sociality that culture encounters its

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<sup>23</sup> Spinoza's *Theological-Political Treatise* (1951 123) utilizes the term multitude to describe the Israelites standing before Moses with the ten commandments, recently received from God on Mount Sinai.

meaning and human force. Human culture changes with its changing cultural perceptions. Nevertheless, what is called culture or cultural is, by its nature, formally shared as either rule or meaningful proposition – culture can be conceived as either fixed or debatable in relation to how humans think through their faculties in the world. Western thought gives to the cultural a contemplative element – Kant (1790/2007), for example, discusses culture in relation to the judgement of taste.

Important for the discussion of the definition of climate and the overall discussion of the project; while in *Phenomenology of Mind* (1977), Hegel discusses culture as negotiable, he also describes it as something akin to law. “It is therefore through culture that the individual acquires standing and actuality.” (298) This individual has affinity with Hobbes’ “person” and relates to Commonwealth’s anthropological machine that produces for humans a formal way of being in relation to the state.<sup>24</sup> Through an evaluation of culture and cultural forms across the anthropological world, Hegel justifies civilizational and racial hierarchies. (423) Macherey (2011) describes Hegel’s conceptual positioning of the individual in history against the void of being that Hegel sees in Spinoza’s concepts;(21) this ordering of culture besides law allows for Hegel’s conceptions of agency. This study does not affirm the truth of Hegel’s dialectics; however, it does appreciate how discursive conclusions drawn through cultural thought can take on juridical, law-like functions. Culture, as Virno (2008) may suggest, has a “regularity that stimulates.” (41)

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24 “Thus, Hobbes performs the theoretical operation of letting the social contract work as an Agambenian anthropological machine, which not only produces man in contrast to the animal, but produces a specific version of man: the individual with rights and duties towards the sovereign.” (Popp-Madsen 2014 51)



Chakrabarty (2009 217-218) suggests that the Western cultural complex that Hegel's philosophy helps elaborate puts the totality of Western-oriented cultures in a significantly different relation to the oil-economy than other people. He comments that Western people are regularized towards a petroleum-fueled economy, suggesting that through this particular temporal and status-oriented assumptions about human being and becoming are normalized. Nevertheless, it should be clear that as multitude, no person has any proper way of culturally being other than to be somehow become subject to and participant in the creation and movement cultural forms. It's just that people (Western or otherwise) become routinized into ways of being until other things occur.

Culture – as objects, idea, and as dispositifs and objective ways of being and doing – obtains a law-like force due to how it serves as the mediated-but-finally-unmediatable juncture for so many particular concepts, ways of doing and being. Culture is not law (though laws are cultural) because it is just the particular and sum-total name given to any particular grouping of thought, action and production. But because culture does this, it has value to human organization.<sup>25</sup> This value allows culture to consequentially organize<sup>26</sup> without seeming to organize human relations in particular ways.<sup>27</sup> As a result of this fact, cultural thinking is a premeditated and organizational project, giving logic to

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<sup>25</sup> For a detailed conversation on this point, see Toscano (2008).

<sup>26</sup> Here, the study points to the concept of biopolitics and the ways that the state deploys through culture a means to organize, develop and regulate populations and their ways of being.

<sup>27</sup> The literature here is rich, but see for example Adorno (1977, 1997), Kracauer (1995) Debord (2012), Bürger (1984) Sholette (2011), Stakemeier and Vishmidt (2016).

the academic disciplines of art, anthropology and cultural studies (among other things), and for corporations and governments to have cultural policies.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, regardless of the consequentiality of formal Western cultural practice, culture is not law (unless codified law is the specific subject of discussion), but varieties of more or less consequential ways of thinking through and organizing human relation in the world.<sup>29</sup>

This study hopes that those who work with culture acknowledge that though all the possible applications of their work are indeterminable, their efforts are nevertheless imbricated in varieties of value systems. For this study's interests, cultural workers are, generally, those who somehow work with cultural forms (that is, everyone), though the term more specifically refer to all those who somehow creatively work with culture, sociality, politics and human communication. On the importance of conscientiously working with culture, this study looks to Clastres (1977) and how he describes the connections that Guarani people make between culture's translational relationship with coercive powers. He writes that the Guarani recognize that "power's transcendence conceals a mortal risk for the group, that the principle of an authority which is external and the creator of its own legality is a challenge to culture itself." (35) Cultural activity that is attendant to interests from below can serve as a check to the force of cultural activity determined from above.

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28 See, for example Foucault (1966/2006) for the way that epistemes of knowledge have the capacity to organize the world.

29 Countless writers make this point. This study singles out Chakrabarty (2007, 2009) for his particular identification of techno-logistical cultural constellation of Western cultural commerce against the backdrop of other possible organizations in the world. See also Mbembe (2003), Wynter (2003), Rivolta Femminile (1991).

## **Climate**

Culture can both organize or protect from coercive natural forces in varieties of ways. The definition of climate to which this study attends is particular to how it understands the multitude's potential to respond beside culture to governance and climate change. While Hardt and Negri and Virno see the multitude as potentially capable of confounding the ascribed state/subject relationship, this study understands that the multitude is and will be confounded by climate change in the pinch of state's governing activity. The standard Western conception of climate as fully independent from humanity<sup>30</sup> allows for culture to "apolitically" sit beside the effects of human activity on things understood as nature and on the general effect of climate on human being and becoming. This governing and dominant conceptualization of climate as having no meaningful contribution to general ways of being was conceived during the now-eclipsed geological era of the Holocene.<sup>31</sup>

The Holocene, characterized by its relatively stable climate and geology, allowed for Western philosophical, cultural and political thought to conceive of humanity as outside of nature. The conversation around the term Anthropocene seeks to correct this Holocenic misconception by highlighting the world-historical effects of humanity on weather and geology.<sup>32</sup> Jason W. Moore (2016) provides a correction to the term Anthropocene:

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30 This is the standard conception of humanity existing outside of nature. Among others, Indigenous scholars observe how this conception of human outside nature is purely a Western construct. See for example Todd (2015), Hall (2015).

31 See Chakrabarty (2007), Renn and Laubichler (2014), Tsing (2015), and Haraway (2015).

'Capitalocene' places responsibility for climate change upon human forces organized by capitalism rather than upon humanity in general. This study appreciates Donna Haraway's (2015) contribution to the Anthropocenic nominations; 'Chthulucene', is a term meant to emphasize the need in this era to recognize the entanglements of relations that any human activity is caught up in. This entanglement mirrors the amorphousness of positions people occupy between being multitude, their cultural being, the wastes they lay and their variable relations to nature and culture as governing forces.

It is through the entanglement of weather, geology, culture, habits, politics, projects, economies ideas, other species and so on that this study encounters the multitude. A precept that motivates this study is an awareness that much of the contemporary scholarship around visual cultures in relation to climate change does not attend to how the multitude actually experiences climate change; rather, much of it follows and enforces political lines. To exemplify the prefiguration of a "post-fossil fuel world" T. J. Demos' (2017) *Against the Anthropocene: Visual Culture and Environment Today* highlights a kayak and leisure craft blockade of a mobile oil-drill rig in the waters off Seattle. Nicholas Mirzoeff (2014a) utilizes art historical tools to describe how power works through classical natural imagery to forward racist and exploitation-oriented relations, and discusses how critical work might undo that. McKee and McLagen (2009) describe the goal of their work as twofold: to tracing activist imaginaries, and to follow how power represents itself to make targets perceptible and possible allies visible. Mirzoeff, McKee, McLagen and Demos have good reason to marshal cultural thought along

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32 See Zalasiewicz et. al. (2008).

Marxist and anti-capitalist lines – these policies and industries most responsible for the wreckage of the climate must stop. Understandably Demos (2017), Mirzoeff (2014b) and others see the fight against capital as the primary political conflict in relation to climate change. Demos favors Moore’s portmanteau, Capitalocene, over the Anthropocene, as the former properly lays the direct blame for the crisis upon capitalism.

Along with Žižek (2010 330–336), Demos and Mirzoeff also criticize post-colonial theorist Dipesh Chakrabarty for his use of the term Anthropocene – Žižek for his analysis that the humanity that he sees Chakrabarty as blaming for climate change is not a properly Hegelian subject and therefore implying that capitalism is let off the hook in his writing. “The key struggle is a particular one: one can solve the universal problem (of the survival of the human species) only by resolving the particular deadlock of the capitalist mode of production.” (334)<sup>33</sup> Žižek’s attention turns to Hegelian concerns in the light of the climate to find actionable political solutions to the problem.

Chakrabarty (2009) counters that though, indeed, capitalism must take the direct immediate blame for the problem, its effects will be felt everywhere.

It seems true that the crisis of climate change has been necessitated by the high-energy consuming models of society that capitalist industrialization has created and promoted, but the current crisis has brought into view certain other conditions for the existence of life in the human form that have no intrinsic connection to the logics of capitalist, nationalist, or socialist identities. They are connected rather to

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33 Demos (2017) and Mirzoeff (2014b) follow Žižek’s general argument in their critiques of Chakrabarty.

the history of life on this planet, the way different life-forms connect to one another, and the way the mass extinction of one species could spell danger for another. (217)

Ultimately, this study has no stake in the epistemological debate related to the usage of Anthropocene, Capitalocene, or Chthulucene; it understands that each focuses on a different aspect of the problems associated with human-caused climate change. What it finds useful in this exchange however is how Chakrabarty makes clear the crisis that humanity faces exceeds the scope of normal political considerations; ending capitalism will not save the rest of the world from the ravages of climate change, and the rich will not escape the era unscathed.<sup>34</sup> Regarding the universal nature of the problem, Chakrabarty says that climate change affects all, in accordance with the very particular, individual or collective ways that life has been differently organized across the globe.<sup>35</sup> The goal of this study is to somehow culturally stand by all these multitudinous differences of how people experience climate change. Though it finds affinity with such projects as Demos', its goals are not to impress governmental lines upon the multitude, which already feels in numerous and entangled ways the governing effects of climate. The human condition is such that life is experienced in relation to forces that are external to it; to stand by the multitude, this study requires an appreciation of how these forces affect it. Natural and human force, and violence bear down upon the multitude in different ways in different places; unknown or unyielding forces cast us all into a position

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34 "Unlike in the crises of capitalism, there are no lifeboats here for the rich and the privileged (witness the drought in Australia or recent fires in the wealthy neighborhoods of California)." (Chakrabarty 2009 221)

35 Climate change "calls for a global approach to politics without the myth of a global identity, for, unlike a Hegelian universal, it cannot subsume particularities." (Chakrabarty 2009 222).

of needing to respond in considered and unconsidered ways.

On its most elementary level the “toil and trouble” of obtaining and the pleasures of “incorporating” the necessities of life are so closely bound together in the biological life cycle, whose recurrent rhythm conditions human life in its unique and unilinear movement, that the perfect elimination of the pain and effort of labor would not only rob biological life of its most natural pleasures but deprive the specifically human life of its very liveliness and vitality. The human condition is such that pain and effort are not just symptoms which can be removed without changing life itself; they are rather the modes in which life itself, together with the necessity to which it is bound, makes itself felt. (Arendt 1998 120) <sup>36</sup>

Arendt’s embodied description of how necessity and violence, toil and trouble, bear upon laboring people informs this study’s articulation of how the multitude experiences climate change. For Arendt, laboring has no voice; yet its capacity for aesthesis and its experience of the actual coming and going of itself in the world, is what provides life with meaning. For the multitude, climate is felt in the entanglement of forces that seem to come from beyond, and against which its individual and common practices must orient its ways of living here and now and in some beyond.

For Arendt, the meaning of labor has an existential and moral component – without toil, she suggests, life would be alien to itself. (Arendt 1989 89) Arendt recognizes how her conclusions stand in contradiction with certain Marxist understandings of the potentials

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<sup>36</sup> As the home in this world is the point from where we experience the world, note the Greek root for home (oikos) in both economy and ecology.

of Species Being under what she sees as the goals of communist development, of common being oriented around the natural essence of humanity to the exclusion of other natural forces and without labor and toil.<sup>37</sup> This study sidesteps the argument between Arendt and Marx; its task is not to choose one human horizon over another – this is a question upon which the multitude disagrees. Rather, the study simply embraces Arendt’s description of how she describes human experience providing orientation and meaning in life; that it is through actual aesthesis with the forces of the world that humans activity gains orientation. Thus, rather than engaging in scientific or language-oriented debates around the term, this study simply understands climate as that which the multitude experiences as compelling forces that seems to emerge from powers beyond itself.

## **Policy**

Though policy can be something else,<sup>38</sup> based on its capacity to be institutionalized through bureaucratic means and to follow governing interests, policy can be defined as a top-down project instituted by governing forces to normalize and standardize its own

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37 Arendt (1989 89) writes, “Within a completely ‘socialized mankind,’ whose sole purpose would be the entertaining of the life process-and this is the unfortunately quite unutopian ideal that guides Marx’s theories-the distinction between labor and work would have completely disappeared; all work would have become labor because all things would be understood, not in their worldly, objective quality, but as results of living labor power and functions of the life process.”

She then suggests that such a world would be a completely alien construction, “Marx’s original charge against capitalist society was not merely its transformation of all objects into commodities, but that ‘the laborer behaves toward the product of his labor as to an alien object’ (‘dass der Arbeiter zum Produkt seiner Arbeit als einem fremden Gegenstand sich verhält’ [*Jugendschriften*]-in other words, that the things of the world, once they have been produced by men, are to an extent independent of, “alien” to, human life.” (ibid.)

38 As will soon be discussed, policy can be attuned to and instituted by bottom-up grassroots interests, culturally formalized but working with the multitude’s capacities for common sense organization of human affairs and activities.



interests and efforts.<sup>39</sup> The invention of what is commonly called policy emerged, according to Foucault (2007), through the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, as a top-down structure intended to organize social peace throughout the states of Europe, to make “good use of the state's forces.” (314) The definition of what is “good” is one reason why this study attends itself to theological concerns<sup>40</sup> — 'good' is rarely a universal concept but rather one that the multitude assembles and dis-assembles around. The 'good' can be a political concept that relates to what can be socially organized to the benefit of any particular class,<sup>41</sup> under the possible illusion that what is good for one is good for all.

Politically, “policy” can be attendant to politically indeterminate things – this is reflective of how culture variably relates to the powers of coercion and force. In this age of still ascendant neoliberal culture, cultural policy matters can be attendant to a variety of concerns. Cultural policy can be attendant to top-down or insurgent interests and played out through all kinds of dispositifs of people, ideas and possible organizationality. So, conversations from a variety of political perspectives that coalesce in conversations

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39 Some key reference points for contemporary debates on cultural policy in relation to top-down liberal cultural management include Giddens (1994), Bennet (1998), Florida (2004), Lewis and Miller (2008), and O'Brien (2014).

40 This study ultimately articulates the need for human-organizational horizons as theological interests — which may or may not be atheistic. Theology is understood as the cultured ways for organizing collective horizons of being and becoming across distance and time; providing orientational perspective for living and dying. As theology is understood here as a meaning architecture, a deity is simply an inessential element who may or may not provide a transcendent perspective within or of the architecture. For this study, in relation to these questions, this study draws see, most notably on the work of Wynter (1995), Laruelle (2002, 2012), Agamben (2005), Esposito (2011), Dean (2012).

41 In relation to politics, Rancière's definition of policy is the making structural of whose voice is accounted for and who is rewarded for being counted. (Rancière 1999, 29)

around the creative or smart city,<sup>42</sup> degrowth,<sup>43</sup> and new municipalism<sup>44</sup> (for example) can all be considered as policy debates with some affinity to the concerns of this study – considering that they somehow organize populations and their living and consuming habits (their cultural habits) in relation to what a state or potential state can order. The theoretical work of art historians and visual culture scholars like Demos and Mirzoeff can also be described as policy-interested in that they are laying out ways and providing institutional logics for political projects to be carried out across the contested cultural terrain. While this study's policy focus finds affinity with these projects, it looks elsewhere – towards the less politically consolidated field of the multitude – but, as stated above, not with the immediate project and task given to it by Hardt and Negri.

This study claims that there can be a cultural policy that can be in some way attendant to the general interests of the multitude and be affirmatively affected by it in all its ways. Such a policy would organize cultural work in support of general multitudinous capacities for being and doing rather than in affinity to any particular political or theoretical project.<sup>45</sup> This focus then relates to the universal nature of human being,<sup>46</sup>

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42 See for example, Jacobs (1961/2011), Davis (1990), Harvey (2000), Florida (2002), and Sennett (2018).

43 See for example, Herman (1972), Carlsson (2008), Czech (2013), Giacomo D'Alisa, Demaria & Kallis (2015).

44 See for example, Harvey (2013), Observatorio Metropolitano (2013), Colau & Alemany (2014), Baird (2015), and Russel & Reyes (2017).

45 As such, such lines would become a line by which to discipline the multitude for articulated interests that may or may not benefit the multitude.

46 Marx's (2009) conceptualization of Species Being demonstrates the powerful basis for a political program, of the scope of communism, that launching a project based on a whole of humanity's essential being might suggest.

though through a conception of the multitude's variable capacities to conceive of its own common-sense practices of being and doing. This is a universal though non-universalizable conception,<sup>47</sup> as it focused in multitudinous relations to processes rather than transcendent truth. Deleuze (1988) utilizes Spinoza's conceptualization of common notions to discuss how universal horizons demonstrate a capacity for common organization and an incapacity for humanity to ever truly orient towards any singular transcendent universal. "Spinoza radically rejects the notions of eminence, equivocality, and even analogy (notions according to which God would possess the perfections in another form, a superior form)". (52)

The multitude's ways of doing and being, which can be understood as the multitude's political anthropology<sup>48</sup> relates to the ways in which the multitude can be that body which is necessary for any form of human governance— for it is the multitude which does make politics possible. Making worlds allows for multitudinous ways of being and doing within those worlds. That is, the multitude's ways of being and becoming are its universal but not-universalizable processes of organizing and prioritizing the expansive range of activities that are then refined through the mesh of "common sense."

This study understands common sense through Spinoza's (2001) conceptualization of

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<sup>47</sup> The interest in working with concepts that are universal but not-universalizable relates to the debates signaled above between Chakrabarty and Žižek and that are further fleshed out throughout the thesis. Sylvia Wynter's (see Wynter and McKittrick 2015), of thinking about the limits of a purely "biological" definition of the human become a key concept for this study, as does Foucault's (1998) approach to working with human variability.

<sup>48</sup> This articulation of the multitude's capacities is taken from Read (2016).

'common notions'. For Spinoza, understanding is worldly, embodied, processual and relational – and mediated through 'common notions'. 'Common notions', which describe the procedural way of reflecting on the world, mediate the range of habits and routines, and ultimately define how people assess whether or not their ideas are “adequate or confused.” (2P36 – 2P39) The varied processes of organizing common sense represents the multitude’s own capacity to define its relations to culture and politics horizons. The PAH demonstrates this process for this study; in a related way, The PAH also demonstrates how common sense that is drawn from and across the common sociality of people can define from below what people demand of their culture and politics- therefor being the particular multitude comes to define policy.

Common sense understandings of the world are generated around common experiences of objects and concepts.<sup>49</sup> Objects and concepts can become subjects of policy from above or below,<sup>50</sup> here, Agamben’s concept of “the whatever object” emerges as an important concept to describe how objects can be employed to carry a policy out.<sup>51</sup> The study's turns to questions of objects and concepts in terms of their relationship to culture<sup>52</sup> in the time of climate change, because such crisis generate situations where any

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49 See Saito (2010) for a discussion of how aesthetic and object-oriented affections contribute to the mundane order of human organizationality.

50 The critical art discourse known as institutional critique is a useful corollary here, as it describes possible dissonance between intention and effect across the variety of institutional players. See for example Raunig & Ray (2009), and Bennett (1998).

51 Agamben's (1993) concept of the whatever object identifies the fact that objects can carry out varieties of meanings and that as potentially universal things, they can be unmoored from any originary concepts or contexts. In this study, objects are understood to mean any variety of things that can be conceptually or actually identified – that is, anything that might be a noun.

52 For committed political reads of how politics may move through objects, see Thoburn (2010),

culture's common sense bumps up against its own governing concepts. Within crisis situations<sup>53</sup> common sense practices must reveal themselves as actual management tools for establishing or mediating multitudinous being across and towards a variety of horizons.<sup>54</sup> Importantly, common sense may or may not demonstrate ethical considerations of what should be common human practice, the terms of the debate for what is commonly sensed is ultimately open to human variability and the wide margins of human judgement. In order to maintain its progressive orientation in relation to the multitude, this study does develop an ethical matrix through which to evaluate cultural forms in relation to the multitude's variable common sense functions. This matrix' ethic is to support the ongoing variability of the multitude's efforts and their common sense orientations in relation to its being pinched between law and climate.<sup>55</sup>

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and Shukaitis (2013).

53 This study observes how Autonomist Marxists (see for example Clover 2016, Dupont 2003) understand the labor crisis of capitalism, and to Feminist (for example Irigaray 1996, Rivolta Femminile 1991), and Post-Colonial (for example Mbembe 2003, Wilderson 2014) thought for a more systemic look at issues of social reproduction in a global capitalist and Western order.

54 See Quarantelli (2001) for a leading sociological/disaster account of general human capacities in disaster and Solnit (2009) for her account of the ways that humans generally recover from disaster through common capacities; and the politicization of common response. Speaking about Hurricane Katrina and crisis situations generally, Solnit writes:

“Today Cain is still killing his brother” proclaims a faded church mural in the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans, which was so devastated by the failure of the government levees. In quick succession, the Book of Genesis gives us the creation of the universe, the illicit acquisition of knowledge, the expulsion from Paradise, and the slaying of Abel by Cain, a second fall from grace into jealousy, competition, alienation, and violence. When God asks Cain where his brother is, Cain asks back, “Am I my brother's keeper?” He is refusing to say what God already knows: that the spilled blood of Abel cries out from the ground that has absorbed it. He is also raising one of the perennial social questions: are we beholden to each other, must we take care of each other, or is it every man for himself? (Solnit 2009 2--3)

55 Here, again, Foucault (1998) provides essential guidance.

For culture to peaceably organize a policy through sociality – or, inversely – for institutional policy to be reflective of what would satisfy the multitude without resorting to violence, it still needs in some way to appeal to common sense so that there is some logic to the order.<sup>56</sup> Witness, for example the crisis that Jo Freeman (1970) famously describes in her Tyranny of Structurelessness essay<sup>57</sup>. Policy is fully open to politics from above or below and either way may or may not be beneficial to the multitude.<sup>58</sup>

### **Governance and government**

Power is what is experienced through the climate, whether it is the potency of a good economic climate, a fierce and destructive storm, a cop, or the meaningful danger in a neighbor's threat. The multitude, with the things it must relate to, work in some way to govern, utilize, ignore, avoid or escape power. Government is the most formal of ways that humanity conceptualizes its own organization in relation to the rest of the world, be this in relation to the wind's power,<sup>59</sup> or the army of another government.<sup>60</sup> Unless

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56 Here, in this way of generating an actual policy attendant to the multitude, this study is indebted to the Monster Institutions issue of the European Institute for Progressive Culture (2008)

57 Freeman (1970) writes:

A "laissez faire" group is about as realistic as a "laissez faire" society; the idea becomes a smokescreen for the strong or the lucky to establish unquestioned hegemony over others. This hegemony can be so easily established because the idea of "structurelessness" does not prevent the formation of informal structures, only formal ones. Similarly "laissez faire" philosophy did not prevent the economically powerful from establishing control over wages, prices, and distribution of goods; it only prevented the government from doing so.

58 Here is the ambiguous tie that Virno (2008) makes between the one and the many.

59 In their own ways, Negarestani (2008), Woodard (2012), and other Object Oriented Ontologists adequately describe the governing forces that objects and things exert in the world. Coole & Frost (2010) provide a more political discussion of the nature of matter organized in the

otherwise noted, the term “government” here suggests the entanglement of (financial, bureaucratic, biopolitical, academic etc.) institutions that entanglements of finance and states orchestrate, as an ultimately singular entity that we commonly call “the government”.<sup>61</sup> Governments have identifiable interests and chains of command that carry out their directives in effort to achieve measurable goals. As a singular entity, this government is the opposite of the multitude.

Governance is a more vaguer term and relates specifically to things that exert force, whether that force is geological, economic, climatological, political, a tasty cookie or a stoplight.<sup>62</sup> Governing concepts are ideas that seem to be meaningful and therefore orient thought, policy and activity in their suggested direction.<sup>63</sup> Governments, governance and

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world.

60 While government suggests an active partner in the making of history in time, cultural and ecological inheritances from the past, scaffolded into ecological and social relations entangle actual being within a network with a limited framework for actual rearrangement. See Odling-Smee (1998), Povinelli (2006), and Renn & Laubichler (2014).

61 This study is indebted to the work of Foucault (1991, 2003, 2007) for his tracing of the genealogy of government’s entanglements with economics. Though this study appreciates the multi-levelled and entangled nature of governance, it ultimately uses the word to point through those entanglements to suggest an identifiable power structure — one that ultimately has the biggest guns and loudest voice, or as Foucault (1991 91) puts it, that which has the “transcendent singularity of Machiavelli’s prince” — be that prince a formal or informal organization, a family or a single individual.

62 The concept of governance has been discussed as descriptive of the multi-layered approaches to managing social problems (Swyngedouw 2005) or in criticism of how the term depoliticizing and obscuring governmental action (Walters 2004). Neither usage is intended by this study — the use here is meant to be purely descriptive of the fact that things, human-caused or otherwise, have managing effects on other things. Further, these managing effects may or may not have anything to do with what has been traditionally been described within political theory as having anything to do with decision making processes.

63 This concept here relates here to developments within professional and academic disciplines, where particular orientations and inquiries become, for a time, hegemonic. Foucault (1966/2006), Smith (2016), and Chakrabarty’s (2001) work about the boundaries of academic disciplines in

governing concepts are not necessarily universal; rather, they are institutions or naturally occurring effects that people look to, are told to look towards, or are forced to orient by; perhaps sometimes for leadership or for profit. Nevertheless, through their scale of affects (which is by definition large and therefore more than conceptually related to the climate) they bend relationally towards the universal. Without governing concepts, governmentality can be understood as a simple diagram or a patterning of force relations that is employed through human cultural and nature/cultural relations. In difference to this apolitical pattern of power, for this study any mode of governmentality (and therefore the policy statements of this study) definitionally sits (comfortably or not) upon the back of and in some way in difference to the multitude.

### **Chapter outline**

Subsequent to this introduction, Chapter 1 expands upon the relation between nature and culture and demonstrates the roles that governing concepts play in organizing particular nature/culture relationships. With examples drawn from art and anthropological literature, the chapter demonstrates how culture can be attendant to governing interests rather than the interests of the multitude. This demonstration is done, in order to clearly define the goals of the project, its terms and concepts. It lays out the basics of both Hobbesian and Spinozan political theory in order to begin a discussion of how the multitude relates to both worldly being and governance. The chapter identifies this study's definition of the multitude via a discussion of Virno.

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relation to political and cultural developments have been instructive for this study, while Foucault (1998) has been central.



Chapter 2 looks at how culture confronts what is traditionally defined as natural force, and how politics are contingent to whatever is posed in this particular relation between nature and culture. The chapter starts out with a discussion of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and how Dark Mountain responded to the 2015 Paris Climate Summit. The writing and politics of Dark Mountain are examined in relationship to cultural thought contingent to and in affinity with the group. Finding the project's position generally inadequate at helping think through how cultural forms might best respond to multitudinous interests in a changing climate, the chapter's conclusion looks toward other objects and concepts within contemporary culture, in relation to political theory, in order to identify what sort of cultural conceptualization is needed to address this study's concerns.

Chapter 3 looks at where political leadership, individual need, creativity and common sense converge in the social movement organized through Barcelona's PAH. The chapter begins with an introduction discussing how to consider the PAH in relation to common definitions of people in struggle, in order to see how the study of the PAH might generally relate to the multitude. It identifies how popular social movements relate to general questions of leadership, expressed through an exploration of classical political thought. It connects these questions of leadership to the experiences of people in crisis, to the socio-political constructions of mental health, and also the concept of the 'general intellect'. The chapter then lays out, from research and fieldwork observations, the variety of orientations and actions that the PAH goes through to effect political change in its effort to house its members.

The fourth chapter begins to synthesize concepts discussed in the previous chapters in relation to an understanding of ecology and climate change, as the particular encounter between nature and culture. It does so in three interrelated ways: first by working through the previously discussed concepts in relation to evolutionary biology, then in relation to governmental concepts of law and economics, then in relation to theological and cultural questions. It identifies the variable spaces between all these conceptual structures as places where the multitude may or may not find the social play that would allow for the development of other common sense ways of being. Through this process, the chapter also brings into view the study's most general definition of the multitude's ethical interests in relation to broader governing forces.

The final chapter draws connections between statements and conclusions seeded throughout the previous chapters and brings them together to lay out an eleven-point policy statement.

## Chapter 1

### An Introduction to the Problem

With the possibility of an eleven foot sea level rise, ocean acidification, a five degree increase in average global temperature, heightened extinction rates, etc., climate change will force changes in how humans live in relation to the earth and each other in particular and general ways.<sup>64</sup> These changes could be catastrophic. While this study asserts that governmental activity will fail to meaningfully address the challenges that climate change presents to humanity, this belief means little to the study's actual facts. While not ignoring governance, this study is decidedly disinterested in the perspective of what formal government can produce by itself. Rather, this study is interested in describing a policy in relation to the multitude, that body of people everywhere that according to Paolo Virno (2004) "shuns political unity, resists authority, does not enter into lasting agreements, and never attains the status of juridical person because it never transfers its own natural rights to the sovereign." (25) The multitude exists by its unaccountable sociality which prescribes and informs particular individual meanings and behaviors that are beside, with, against and indifferent to governance and law while also being capable of transforming these very forces of governance. It is this multitude, which this study sees as potentially descriptive of all humanity in relation to law, that this study aims to support through cultural work. This is because it is the multitude's experiences of climate change, rather than governments' experiences, that matter. Government is ultimately a tool – the multitude are beings.

A cultural policy of the multitude is written upon what the multitude, in its myriad ways and possibilities, already does. In terms of livability in the time of a changing climate, the

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<sup>64</sup> The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) states: "Climate change impacts, adaptation, and vulnerability span a vast range of topics. With the deepening of knowledge about climate change, we see connections in expanding and diverse areas, activities, and assets at risk. Early research focused on direct impacts of temperature and rainfall on humans, crops, and wild plants and animals. New evidence points to the importance of understanding not only these direct impacts but also potential indirect impacts, including impacts that can be transmitted around the world through trade, travel, and security. As a consequence, few aspects of the human endeavor or of natural ecosystem processes are isolated from possible impacts in a changing climate. The interconnectedness of the Earth system makes it impossible to draw a confined boundary around climate change impacts, adaptation, and vulnerability."

cultural policy is not meant to explain things to the always-variable multitude who through their experiences feel the changing climate's effects. Rather, the study is meant for the consideration of those who work culturally within and in relation to the multitude. This study's cultural policy and twelve-point conclusion is written for the consideration of cultural workers (loosely defined as people who consider their activities or work to be relationally meaningful to others) in order to clarify how they may best calibrate their cultural efforts in relation to the others of the multitude.

Properly speaking, the human multitude has no particular cultural policy – no rules for how to behave other than in relation to the limits of all possible behaviors. The human multitude has no particular cultural policy as it has no formal interests outside of those that are general to all living organisms. By its very nature the multitude ignores, exceeds, inverts or contradicts any policy made for and by it. As human history demonstrates, and as this thesis investigates, multitudinous actors particularly produce things and concepts that transform particular relations and relational capacities with historical impact. To create a cultural policy, the relation between abstract cultural forms and their relation to how they structure the living of life must be understood. Therefore, the methodology investigates the systems and objective natures of cultural work in relation to the systems of being, knowing and doing that construct the intimate and abstract frames for multitudinous sociality. In terms of multitudinous sociality, the study's model (presented in Chapter 3) is based upon the Spain-based *Plataforma de Afectados Por La Hipoteca* (the PAH), a grassroots social movement that helps individuals fight against the banks and state for the right to housing. In terms of cultural work, the study expands upon the United Kingdom-based *Dark Mountain Project* (presented in Chapter 2) that produces poetry and art in relation to climate change.

Though multitudinous actors' formal identities are as variable as the world, formally speaking, when one works to create cultural forms to manage, govern or relate to the multitude, one acts in relation to them rather than being a part of them. In terms of the worldly actors, some are the cultural workers for whom this study is written. Others who behave like actors have no discernable face at all – the climate and other “natural” actors

loudly demonstrate their governing roles in this time of climate change. A changing climate and a poisoned world have the capacity to cause mass extinction or just totally demand major adjustments in how beings live on the earth. The ecological components of the world have been, and are in relationship with the multitudes. That climate change's effects are experienced by the multitude means that culture must allow for ways for the multitude to live in some way with them. To live "in some way" with climate change's effects does not suggest a capacity to govern climate change's effects, however. Rather, to live in some way with these effects is understood here to describe ways to support the multitude's capacities of coming to terms with the social and biological realities of the changing world.

Definitional conversations around the *Anthropocene*<sup>65</sup> demonstrate the role that humans have played in affecting the climate and changing the earth's chemical composition. Western thought has finally begun to acknowledge the role that climate, and its unsettling play, both in setting the grounds for and governing particular human possibilities.<sup>66</sup> Other terminology has been generated to define this era of human geological impact. Jason W. Moore (2016) uses the term *Capitolocene*<sup>67</sup> to clearly identify "capitalism as a way of organizing nature – as a multi-species, situated, capitalist world-ecology." (6) While Moore's conceptualization of capitalism's relation to nature comes to matter in this study, it is Donna Haraway's term *Chthulucene*<sup>68</sup> that seems to most meaningfully define this

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65 Though throughout anthropological history, humans have been aware of their impacts on the earth, Dutch atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen is credited with popularizing the term Anthropocene in around 2002. (Zalasiewicz et. al. 2011) The author of this study became familiar with the term through the 2013 Anthropocene Project at Berlin's Haus der Kulturen der Welt, and via Latour (2013), Diederichsen & Franke (2013).

66 See Chakrabarty (2009) for a concise essay on the changing role climate has begun to play in Western historical thought.

67 For Moore (2016), the term Anthropocene "shows Nature/Society dualism at its highest stage of development," (3) and is one way of framing this fraught relationship. In an effort to suggest alternative names for the era, Moore wants terms that more clearly represent what is at stake and what needs to be done in relation to the Anthropocenic moment.

68 "Poeisis is sym-chthonic, sym-poesie, always partnered all the way down, with no starting and subsequently interacting 'units.'" (Haraway 2016 37)

moment. As Moore says of Haraway's concept, with the Chthulucene, "[w]e begin to see human organization as utterly, completely, and variably porous within the web of life." (5) Haraway's (2016) poetic<sup>69</sup> capacities describe the stakes of this moment: "The Chthulucene does not close in on itself; it does not round off; its contact zones are ubiquitous and continuously spin out loopy tendrils." (37) This study shares with Haraway an awareness of relationality and the absolute stickiness of conceptual distinctions that are only partially distinct because their differences are real or conceptual – or contain no difference at all. The multitude is the one and the many, it needs the governmentality that it exceeds and disobeys. Thinking through how cultural forms work within this knotted contradictory mess is at the heart of this project. How, through the fixed set of things of this ecological world set by relations, can we generate different outcomes?

The effects of cultures' concepts (like the concept of peace, or a necktie) are singularly maintained and vary across the different scales of life that act as regulatory networks and logistical infrastructures. The ability to maintain singular cultural ways and means across different fields is what is understood as that which makes something attendant to policy. Besides policed things, with such structures the multitude's activities are varied in particular relation to the world and to the multitude itself. In this study, it is understood at a basic level that all things cultural are natural. The policy statements that conclude the work summarize the natures of culture that matter to the multitude in the time of climate change; and identify how culture's meaningful characteristics appear to differently support the viscous multitude. This study has a social, rather than material focus, looking at how cultural forms bear on and orient social relations. So, singularly material subjects like green architecture, green planning, green industrial design and ecologically oriented fine arts immediately fall out of the specific focus of this work. Only to the extent that they inform or are subjects of human relationality, are these subjects of general interest.

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69 "How can we think in times of urgencies *without* the self-indulgent and self-fulfilling myths of apocalypse, when every fiber of our being is interlaced, even complicit, in the webs of processes that must somehow be engaged and repatterned? Recursively, whether we asked for it or not, the pattern is in our hands. The answer to the trust of the held out hand: think we must." (Haraway 2016 39)

By theorizing the different capacities of what is ultimately cultural in any creation, what is affirmed here in cultural work is how it informs relations between the multitude and things in the world.

## 1 Culture and Nature

Nature and culture have been conceptualized in different ways across history and place; Western thought<sup>70</sup> has generally considered properties that humans seem to share with other natural organisms as “natural,” and properties that are presented as unique to the potentials of human life and its technical survival as society, as “cultural.”<sup>71</sup> Against these distinctions, the multitude straddles the nature/culture divide: the multitude lives as it does, rather than as either “cultural” or “natural.”

In addition to the multitude having no particular cultural policy, a generally human cultural policy is also fairly indistinct, as that which can be described as the particular general interests of humans beyond things of general interests to all other organisms is a slim matter.<sup>72</sup> The general cultural policy of all species, expressed through their relational

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70 Simondon (2011) writes a concise history of ways Western philosophy has conceptualized the similarities and differences between the human and other earthly organisms. He draws a sharp dividing line between Descartes and Aristotle. He describes how, upon priestly Christian thought, Descartes judged animals one way and varieties of humans another; Aristotle non-systemically draws relations between all creatures’ capacities and behaviors. Ultimately, this study’s conceptualization of the multitude’s nature is more akin to Aristotle’s conceptualization, that Simondon describes thusly: “[W]hat comes out of the teachings of Antiquity is that what occurs in man and what occurs in animals is comparable. Comparable. Not identical but comparable: it is with the same mental categories, the same regulating concepts, and the same schemas that we can further our understandings of human and animal life, inside the general teachings of existence, of our relationship with the world, reincarnation, *polygenesis*, or *the gradation and degradation of existence*.” (58–59).

71 Perhaps, if proper to a collection of people, they may be termed civil. Hobbes (1929 64) describes two types of philosophical knowledge; one natural, one civil. One is a result of “Consequences from the accidents of Bodies Naturall; which is called Naturall Philosophy,” the second demonstrates, “Consequences from the Accidents of *Politique* Bodies; which is called *Politiques* and Civill Philosophy.”

72 The philosophical, theological and biological conversation around the particular nature of each organism is beyond this study’s interests. Noting that all organisms have natures particular to what, who and how they are is sufficient.

behavior, is comprised of their interest in living and therefore surviving over time. Nevertheless, interested human thought has made much of distinctions between human and other species' general cultural policies.<sup>73</sup>

So, this first chapter expands upon what is meant by the multitude, and also what it means for the multitude to have a cultural policy. Delineating an ontology that a nature/culture divide allows for in narrating particular human anthropologies is at the core of cultural life and is the task of Chapter 4. In that chapter, one finds a discussion of Jason W. Moore's distinction between capitalism's nature/culture divide and that of all other ontologies that is essential to this study's conclusions. Chapters 2 and 3 work through the particular concepts revealed through the study's nominal subjects, the Spain-based *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca* [Platform for People Affected by Mortgages] and the United Kingdom-based *Dark Mountain Project*. The discussion of *Dark Mountain* also helps with a discussion of general concepts contingent to climate change. The PAH chapter opens up a discussion of political leadership that figures into the multitude's organization of self-management in relation to governance.

### **1a On the Nature of Cultural Things**

All this, regardless of the fact that the nature/culture divide is narrative and fictive, and that destiny is written in time rather than culturally predetermined in advance. As philosopher Catherine Malabou (2017) concludes, geology, biology and cultural history historically coalesce into human behavioral patterns to meaningfully inform human agents for future world-changing events, even though their humanity suggests no proper horizon and no necessary destination of human becoming. "This 'species' the human remains a pure void concept." (52) Climate change is an issue because of how it

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73 While not a focus of this work, this comment is partially meant to acknowledge the possibility for other ways to culturally orient relational thought; much literature and global historical and anthropological documentation can be seen to capture a diversity of ontologies. In terms of contemporary writing, this study looks towards Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's oeuvre as a concerted effort to crystallize non-Western ontological thought, or, more specifically, "Amerindian thought." This comment is also meant to suggest that the co-species arrangements that, for example, Pollan (2002) suggests. Finally, outside of a properly human ontology stand ontologies proper to the general production of geological stratum over time (see Negarestani 2008 and Woodard 2012).



continues to bear down on pre-existing cultural arrangements made in relation to nature. Culture decidedly and fictively distinguishes itself from nature regardless of the fact that the fictive division nevertheless has a deep narrative utility – it is through the nature/culture division that human behavior is given order, process and hierarchy. This division helps humans conceptualize distinctions between being in time and being over time; animality is often associated with being timelessly in the moment, and being culturally human is associated with possessing a history that can be analyzed and used to strategize towards specific outcomes. Culture gives logic, order and process to sustain activity towards organizational ends. In the face of the Chthulucene's changing natural world, particular human efforts to maintain particular cultural arrangements further dispossess others of their place in the world. This cultural policy suggests ways to work through and against this dispossession and towards particular outcomes revealed over the course of this study.

By naming nature as ongoing, and culture as capable of enacting different relationships to nature's temporality, a useful shorthand for a complex metaphysics is achieved. The complexity of these metaphysics can be grasped in recognizing the schizophrenia inherent to the seamless conceptualization of the differences between being in time and existing over time. Regardless of how being in or over time is cut, the surgery divides the same body. In recognizing that the multitude's social body is divided by governing concepts, what otherwise might be a strange but useful conceptual operation becomes a recognition of the total fact that humans everywhere live in moments afforded by structures and routines generally organized to serve something over time. From the multitude's perspective, being in and over time provides the window and extended frame of being, in difference or similitude. The multitude's organizationality may serve many things; things may be organized to profit others, for profit-sharing, or for the multitude's own intimate needs.

Beyond the particularities of each human life stands an awareness of what, naturally, human collaborations within and between nature and culture have allowed; the multitude as a general population has organized and lived in incalculably diverse, naturally cultural

situations. Within this worldly ecology – which means differing ecologies, differing economies, histories, climates etc. – different things contribute everywhere to the particularly scaffolded ways of just generally being human. And so, it is possible to say that while humans generally live in the same natural way (are born after the fertilization of a mother’s egg by the sperm of a father, with blood coursing through their veins and a general need to eat and sleep), over time they relationally structure for themselves “culturally” particular ways of just socially being. These ways are formally recognized as proper and particular to (for example) regions, organizations, lifestyles, employment, religion, ideology, and as proper to family or clan. These ways are also recognized as variable over the course of an individual’s lifetime. The concepts that generalize particular social organization in place or way are defined here as anthropologies of culture.<sup>74</sup>

It can also be said that while humans generally live in the same natural way, they also meet the same but different ends. Everyone dies. The collective panic about anthropocenic climate change is not about death in general; in some ways culture has always worked to manage life and its transitions to death. The collective panic about anthropocenic climate change is about deadly ways in particular – that climate drastically alters cultural assumptions about human relational possibilities to life’s potentialities: what it means to have lived a good life attendant to how death can be understood as having been as good as life, in general. That everyone lives their own death, but with death being generally made contingent to a few people’s<sup>75</sup> ways of life, is one reason why the multitude’s, rather than governments’ experiences of climate change matters.

Governments fall apart but do not die; people die.

Anthropologies conceptualize the cultural structures and routines for particular lives that hold true even across great distances. Beyond conceivable description, however, are the

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74 Anthropologist Edward Taylor (1920 1) defines culture in this way: “Culture, or civilization, taken in its broad, ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.”

75 By a few people, this study means very rich people who control vast resources.

myriad particular, common and generally human social encounters where particular people share innumerable thoughts, actions, activities and meaning even across great difference. This study names these shared interactions “social”. Particular life is built in social comparison, conflict, dialogue and collaborations whose micro-political logics manage things differently from governmental anthropologies. Their differences from cultural norms are multitude. This study attempts to conceptualize the organization of the multitude through conceptual frames like the *whatever*, the *spectacle* and the *general intellect*, among others. Ultimately, the discussion returns to concepts of culture – how cultural things orient activity. This function of culture is different from the anthropological understanding of culture; it is more attendant to concerns of culture as theorized by fine art and media theory. But through both definitions, culture is discussed in Chapter 4 as having either law-likely or lawless effects, as related to their participation in law-like human dispositifs of governance.

The multitude shares a common world in the way that the global atmosphere, the common features of human beings, a common language, a city, a psychedelic experience or unequal economic system can be shared. Marx’s concept of the *general intellect*<sup>76</sup> can also be considered in these terms; as shared intelligence. The generality of “sharing” is built around the common human faculty to conceptually relate to things, regardless of position. It can be said that cultures, at a variety of scales, share across the commons of relationality. Scales constitute the layered, concurrent and contradictory folds that nature and culture allow as the lived terrain for humanity.<sup>77</sup> To the extent that they are concretized processes, scales policy cultural objects and concepts so that they express outcomes that culturally appear so limited in variation that the results appear as if enforced by law. Matters of sharing are innately cultural, what this study defines as “policy” are the ways in which anthropologies enculture and organize concepts and objects over the open possibility that a multitudinous nature suggests.

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76 This study mostly works, in Chapter 3, with Virno’s (2008) refinement of Marx’s (1993 704–712) concept of the general intellect.

77 Both folds and scales can be understood as nominations of variation or difference within or across the same or related material. Through Deleuze (1991) they can be understood psychologically and philosophically, through Cowan (2014) logistically.

Across shared life within and across scales, one can recognize that human-made cultural objects and structures (artistic, social, political, architectural, logistical, financial, etc.) are classifications and objectifications of forces that help to ecologically relate with other forces in the worldly ecosystem. The multitude is fluid in relation to the world, not just in relation to itself. The question of how culture makes the multitude relate, according to contingencies, is the subject of this debate. While *Dark Mountain* produces cultural objects, their production begins with books intended to culturally orient readers. Within the United Kingdom, their work is relatively well known, and their editors contribute to *The Guardian*. Each book and its contents mediate relations between a reader and other things through the environmental frame they are interested in. Chapter 2 works through *Dark Mountain* and their claim that their work is “not political;” a claim that if true would suggest they might contribute to this study in a unique way. Though the grounds for this claim prove insufficient in helping structure this study’s policy suggestions, analyzing their work opens up a necessary discussion on the political nature of cultural systems and organizational scales.

After a theoretical introduction, Chapter 3 provides an example of where the multitude re-orientes its relations to governance, which itself is a cultural thing. The chapter follows the social activity, within Barcelona, of the *Platform for People Affected by Mortgages*. Focusing on the commons of housing in Spain, the PAH finds play with social relations contingent to housing. The chapter demonstrates how the PAH reformulates common notions of what social arrangements can allow for, despite pre-existing law. Acting here, the PAH operates beyond the constraints of formal culture and governance. Informal sociality is the praxis of the multitude, and the PAH channels such informality in particular ways. According to this study, the PAH’s uncommon success is based on the extent to which they engage with the genuine diversity across the common terrain of the city. The PAH employ grassroots sociality across scales of difference, over, alongside and through cultural forms. In this way, the PAH cannot ignore formal governance that determines scaled relations.

## 2 On the Tautology of the Multitude in Self-governance

The PAH demonstrate nominal autonomy within the multitude; nominal because the multitude is caught in Chthulucenic entanglements. How their autonomy is conceptualized with the assistance of the seventeenth-century philosopher Baruch Spinoza. Spinoza conceptualizes how individual and social experience can be organized to generate common ways of doing things differently – a process this study refers to as working through *common notion*, based on Spinoza’s theorizations of *common conceptualization*. This common way of working through individualized issues balances the Chthulucenic tension between autonomy and collectivity. Spinoza’s work is discussed here to explain this process, and for his conceptualizations of the multitude that, along with Hobbesian thought introduced later in this chapter, focuses in on the tension between multitudinous activity and governmental logic.

Étienne Balibar’s (2008) study of Spinoza’s multitude nominates them as the individual or group that is often internally divided and prone to both divisive and unifying passions.<sup>78</sup> And yet, because the multitude comprises a body that can cohere, Balibar recognizes in Spinoza’s conceptualization a deeply political question: “to what extent is the multitude capable of governing its own passions?” (50) For this study, Spinoza does not provide a perspective on the multitude’s relation to an independently conceivable governance (Virno’s work is discussed for this reason at the chapter’s end) so much as he demonstrates how a perspective on an anthropology of the multitude informs ethics and governmental thought. The question of the multitude’s own governing capacities is in regards to its own intimacy with its living processes that must contend with worldly forces of governance – which includes human and natural law.<sup>79</sup>

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78 According to Balibar (2008), “[the multitude] lacks the minimum of coherence that would allow it to correct its errors, to adjust ends to means. In most societies, moreover, it is denied both rights and access to information. It is simply a medium in which different passions resonate with one another, in which the ‘fluctuations’ of the city’s soul are amplified, often to extremes.” (71)

79 Spinoza makes clear that his *Tractatus Politicus* (1951) is in dialogue with his *Ethics* (2001) concerning the question of how the multitude manages its individual human passions in relation to others. He suggests that the best governmental forms are not those led by rational leaders, but rather are founded upon solid systemic thought derived from the “general nature or position of mankind” (1951 289) that coordinates humanity’s multitudinous ethics.

As it is the embodied multitude's experiences with life, law and climate change that matter, this project aims to bolster the multitude's capacities for self-governance through cultural form. This affirmation does not ascribe this nominating capacity of governance to the multitudes alone. That is, contrary to some conceptualizations of the multitude,<sup>80</sup> this study does not see the multitude as being uniquely capable of self-governance. The multitude has no identity other than in its ability to formally vary; variation in relation to nothing is not variation – it is the movement of static relations over time. Rather, the multitude is understood as that population that is everywhere contingent to particular things – contingent to things that make life livable and unbearable at a variety of scales.

Timelessly present and defined by potential, the multitude precedes, exceeds and is necessary for the composition of any form of governance to which it relates, though the multitude needs no particular form of governance. (Virno 2004 23 and Balibar 2008 xvii) The creation of human governing forms is derived in some ways by, or as reflections of, the multitude, regardless of how multitudinous behavior is considered. In this way, the multitude is capable of unqualified self-governance in relation to anything. One could say that in necessary collaboration with things, the multitude is capable of self-governance. This thesis is necessarily general and should be understood as almost a tautology; the multitude, in relationship to things, is capable of self-governing because

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Spinoza is not blind to the role that reason can play in governing human action, but his faith in the multitude is not placed in reason as such, or as he puts it:

We showed too [in *Ethics*, 2001], that reason can, indeed, do much to restrain and moderate the passions, but we saw at the same time, that the road, which reason herself points out, is very steep; so that such as persuade themselves, that the multitude or men distracted by politics can ever be induced to live according to the bare dictate of reason, must be dreaming of the poetic golden age, or of a stage-play. (298)

As such, this study understands Balibar's question, focused around whether the multitude is capable of governing its own (collective) passions, to be the same as governing itself.

80 In Hardt & Negri (2000, 2004) the multitude is primarily employed as a class that exceeds but is in relation to classical Marxist conceptions of labor. Though they acknowledge that the multitude preexists governance – by following Marxist conceptualizations of class composition, Hardt and Negri describe the multitude as that which must be composed for the sake of a global democracy understood as proper to the multitude's own nature.

this is how governance and humanity have always operated; excluding the unlikely possibility for divine origins of governmental structures, humans have only autonomously managed themselves as a species – in relation to their creations, to each other and to the wider earth. This tautology defines the central knot of this study.

In the following quote, Spinoza views the multitude as contentious, self-centered and ungoverned: “[I]t follows that everyone is so far rightfully dependent on another, as he is under that other’s authority, and so far, independent, as he is able to repel all violence, and avenge to his heart’s content all damage done to him, and in general to live after his own mind.” (Spinoza 1951 295) Yet, according to Spinoza elsewhere (2001), individuals and groups can also work through *whatever* “common notion” (2P38corr, 2P39)<sup>81</sup> to articulate and make commonly understandable the things that animate or afflict them. To the extent that it is possible, Spinoza gives to the multitude the right to independence from its afflictions; humans needn’t be defined by their suffering. This is their autonomy. Humans can collaborate, together, with joy, to meet their needs against affliction. Importantly, their convergence as a group contains a measure of joyous potential that their particular organizationality allows.<sup>82</sup>

As a thing, the multitude “is not a representation but a praxis” (Balibar 2009 71); it is descriptive of a way of being. Spinoza describes it as a total way of human relation in the world. Governed by brutality and/or compulsion by force or desire, the multitude bodily and culturally interprets and coordinates with the intimacies of life by socially encountering and working through governing concepts; therefore practicing the general human contingency to particular conceptual developments that are functions of social being. This work can occur in a flurry with little consideration or be a practice of considered social engagement. Upon encountering contingencies to things in the world, multitudinous praxis conceptualizes, accepts, socially and relationally affirms or

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81 In keeping with the habit of others, this study utilizes Spinoza’s (2001) own indexing system.

82 “If two come together and unite their strength, they have jointly more power, and consequently more right over nature than both of them separately, and the more there are they have so joined in alliance, the more right they all collectively will possess.” (Spinoza 1951 296)

disassembles these contingent relations. For Spinoza, to assemble and disassemble is a right and injunction of the multitude. As Balibar summarizes, “[t]hose rights are compatible which express powers that can be added or multiplied together; those rights are incompatible which correspond to powers that will mutually destroy one another.” (62)

Spinoza’s metaphysics, methodically spelled out in *Ethics* ([1677] 2001) and *Political Treatise* ([1675] 1951), clarify how the multitude's self-governance is based upon common notions of things. For Spinoza, all things literally begin with a God whose nature is infinite and eternal (2001 1D6) and co-equivalent with the natural.<sup>83</sup> For Spinoza, this beginning with God and nature is literal; he understands that anything knowable has spun out in and over time from a distant past that started with initial divinity. God’s absolutely infinity is ultimately unknowable: composed of all that is conceivable and beyond.<sup>84</sup> God and nature’s existence contains no negation; all that is conceivable proves its existence through its conceivability (1D1); and in its conceivability, proves itself as a Godly attribute. Despite the fact that everything conceivable exists, Spinoza distinguishes between things that only conceptually exist and those things that have a worldly existence. (1P7, 1P9) Through multitudinous activity, the multitude thoughtfully and thoughtlessly tests limits between that which can really exist and that which is only conceptually possible.

When conceiving things, people sense attributes and essences of God/nature extended in reality via things in the world. (2D1) People only know the world as well as they know their own bodies – which, according to Spinoza, is not very well. The human body is an instrument for knowledge that is connected to the worldly things that affect it. (2P20 –

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83 Spinoza (2001 1P29) makes it clear that nothing happens in the world outside of nature, which he names as God. This is given as one proof of his purported atheism.

84 Spinoza axiomatically describes the development of things in the world thusly:

1. Everything which is, is either in itself or in another.
2. That which cannot be conceived through another must be conceived through itself.
3. From a given determinate, cause and effect necessarily follows, and, on the other hand, if no determinate cause be given, it is impossible that an effect can follow. (Spinoza 2001 4)



2P31) As things and concepts of connectivity, cultural things incorporate people within dispositifs of worldly relationality. When really connecting to an attribute of Godly nature, the experience generates a particular affect: joy. Distinguishing joy from the other affects is a worthwhile task; joy is a central affect for Spinoza because it affirms the goodness of life – it confirms life’s potential and potency (3P11), and acts as a signaling route to more joy. (3Aff2) Undo brutality and unfulfilled need may bring sorrow, which flags routes towards decay and waste. (3Aff3) That climate change’s entanglements with capitalism enforce sadness on the multitude, whether or not they attribute their sadness to the effects of climate change under capitalism, would seem a fair assertion to make.

“[W]e cannot here recognize any distinction between desires, which are engendered in us by reason, and those which are engendered by other causes; since the latter, as much as the former, are effects of nature.” (Spinoza 1951 Ch2.2) Spinoza’s appreciation of embodied knowledge clarifies how people are driven to act whether or not they clearly grasp what it is that they are acting upon. In this way the PAH’s transformation of depression, into feelings that motivate systemic change, constitutes a type of autonomy within a system of relations in which people experiencing bankruptcy would normally act differently. Nevertheless, for Spinoza, reason refines what is known in the world through more considered thought. Together people can reason for a greater understanding of the things that matter; different perceptions of what is the matter occur, as people can have different perceptions of that common thing. Common notions can be so generally regarded that their apprehension is universal. (2P40) Hunger, for example, is nearly universally apprehended. By coming to know all that is related to hunger and collectively acting to alleviate it, people come to better know the world, themselves, nature and the nature of hunger.

Spain’s housing crisis demonstrates the limits of capitalism’s capacity to meet common housing needs; the PAH’s notional autonomy works through common notions to socially disassemble from the national housing policy to form something else. It was state policy since Franco that all Spaniards should become homeowners. (López & Rodríguez 2011) In order to grow the GDP, from the '80s on, it was also economic policy to push the

economy through home construction. (Alemany & Colau 2014 30) Because of how many people across all classes in Spain bought homes, the 2008 financial crisis was broad enough to affect all classes in a common way – bankruptcy became a common enough occurrence. Spinoza adequately frames the PAH’s common discursive practice, though to describe frameworks for governance’s actual functions this study will turn to Hobbes’s concepts of the state and ends with Virno’s conceptualization of the multitude’s relation to governance. What comes first, though, is a continued focus on the role ‘the concepts itself’ as things of pure relationality set between particular existence and universal meaning– as relationality, the particular, the universal and the objects that traverse them for social and cultural meaning-making matter for this study.

### **3 “Whatever” cultural things and concepts**

This chapter has suggested that the nature/culture division is a fiction that nevertheless can frame being in and being over time as distinct things. To ask, “how long is a moment of being?” and “how long does a moment last before it can be considered as occurring over time?” demonstrates the narrative-based nature of the task of concepts – and how answers are also only contextually available. These questions demonstrate how the common notion of time opens controversies around which other concepts can coalesce. The concept of the common notion has a quality similar to Agamben's definition of the theological concept *whatever*, with a difference. Spinoza’s “common notions” identify how sociality can refine knowledge by thematizing concepts in relation to things; while Agamben’s notion of the *whatever* demonstrates how each particular concept-thing opens up space for limitless relation.

The *whatever* allows for a discussion of the conceptual thing from which concepts emerge; philosophized by, among others, Aristotle, Saint Thomas, Duns Scotis, and Agamben. The conversation around *whatever* regards the nature of how any concept relates to the thing’s particular form and its universal nature. A concept’s particularity relates to how it is made apparent in its localization as an example of something bigger; the particular thing is identified as really existing (or conceptually existing in real ways) through what made it notable to stand for that greater meaning. The universal presents

itself in scalar relation to the particular, but also as an abstract field of universally accessible concepts that conceivably exist in and for themselves. Through language, *whatever* thing loses its particularity to be the general thing it is named as (a rock, a song, a cartoon character). For itself, *whatever* is the home of pure conceptuality without qualities; Agamben (1993) relates how Christian Scholastics conceptualized limbo – where being is suspended between particular life and universal meaning – through *whatever*.<sup>85</sup> The *whatever* is the realm that intelligence draws from, from where meaning is guided through objects to discern what it (universally) is.<sup>86</sup>

As Agamben puts it, the *whatever* in itself stands indifferent to what others see it expressing in the particular or universal – others’ conceptualizations are contingent on different things than the immediate what and how that *whatever* can offer. That particular objects exceed what others might possibly see them expressing, this exceeding finds parallels with the multitude that precedes and exceeds any governing concept. By exceeding its own self, conceptuality is defined by potential that can neither be contained in the particular aspect for which it is initially noted, nor by the name through which it singularly is universalized; conceptualization suggests the possibility to be anything. *Whatever*, the space from where to draw potentially particular concepts conceptually exists for itself and is nonetheless referenced as the space from which universal concepts emerge. “Common and proper, genus and individual are only the two slopes dropping down from either side of the watershed of whatever.” (20) Besides Spinoza’s commoning of notions for their particular political refinement stands *whatever*’s indifference;<sup>87</sup> what

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85 Agamben (1993 5) discusses Saint Thomas’ articulation of limbo as the place for the unbaptized dead who cannot be judged. They joyfully reside there in a state of animal-like ignorant bliss.

86 Agamben (1993 1) describes anyone’s nomination of *whatever* as what they see as intelligible in and what one wants to articulate of the world. Intelligibility is associated with love and becoming. “Love is never directed toward this or that property of the loved one (being blond, being small, being tender, being lame), but neither does it neglect the properties in favor of an insipid generality (universal love): The lover wants the loved one with all of its predicates, its being such as it is.” (2). The effort of identifying and articulating what one wants or sees in the real or abstract world is associated with moving the concept as object “not toward another thing or another place, but toward its own taking-place...” (2)

87 After discussing Spinoza’s distinction between what comes into existence (as singularities) and what matters (in Spinoza 1953, 2P37), Agamben (1993) writes, “Whatever is constituted not

is nominated is a refinement of the thing which appeared to matter and not the thing itself. Agamben refers to the particular appearance and nomination of *whatever* as “an infinite series of modal oscillations.” (19) That which appeared to have politically mattered and thus stands as a conceptual example for politics is never the full thing itself, but rather a name given to it to stand within another relational and conceptual line that matters for those who conceptualize it.

Critically, Agamben qualifies *whatever*'s particular appearance today in relation to dominant capitalism, in an important way. Agamben (79) positions Debord's spectacle<sup>88</sup> to qualify how, through capitalist reproduction, *whatever* appears becomes universally apprehended as singular things, contingent to nothing but its own being and its independent capitalist valuation. The spectacle strips *whatever* of its relations and obscures any Chthulucenic embeddedness, further driving everything's alienation from everything else. Conversely though, Agamben<sup>89</sup> (and Virno<sup>90</sup>) recognize that *whatever*'s spectacularization makes socially sensible the translatability and equivalence between everything, revealing *whatever* as the pure empty vessel of social translation. So, while the spectacle policies culture to enforce ongoing lines of capitalist development, by conceptualization's exceeding nature, it can suggest sociality's unbound potential to reorganize relationality through *whatever* means toward *whatever* ends. The *whatever* demonstrates how things become narrativized connections for and between other particular things in the wider world.

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by the indifference of common nature with respect to singularities, but by the indifference of the common and the proper, of the genus and the species, of the essential and the accidental.” (19)

88 “It is clear that the spectacle is language, the very communicativity or linguistic being of humans.” (Agamben 1993 80)

89 Agamben associates this fact with the possibility of organizing life in real terms beyond state organization, saying, “For this very reason, however, the era in which we live also that in which for the first time it is possible for humans to experience their own linguistic being – not this or that content of language, but language itself, not this or that true proposition, but the very fact that one speaks.” (Agamben 1993 80)

90 Virno (2008) writing regarding the connection between the spectacle, innovation and sociality are detailed in Chapter 3.

Writing in the 2016 collection *Ecologizing Museums* for L'Internationale, a pan-European organization of progressive art museums, publisher and curator Clémence Seurat reflects on her curatorial work in Paris during the 2015 Climate Summit. She looks towards the examples of the arts to find concepts for responding to the ongoing ecological catastrophe:

We are entering a period of transition that has rendered the fiction of nature and the “Great Divide” narrative inoperative. Faced with the perils of our modernity, the ecological situation calls for us to develop alternative stories. The aim is not to swap the former narrative for another, but to move away from unifying approaches that subtract from our understanding and to seek the “*proliferation of multiplicity.*” (36)

Seurat shares this study's doubts of the summit's capacity to find solutions for the climate problem – she sees the summit as a staging of a financial act rather than a search for solutions. Governance here has deemed that financial instruments are capable, even though finance hardly dissects the complex of problems associated with climate change; the Paris summit suggested that finance – compensating impacted countries – could reduce carbon emissions without finding anyone liable for damage. Seurat says that financial measures share the same logic as the measures and policies that organized and prolong the problem: the financial response is narrow,<sup>91</sup> seeking only to re-narrativize the continuation of wealth's accumulation “guided by the ‘invisible hand’ of the white man, who relentlessly digs deeper and deeper” (35) at the expense of the rest of the world. As there is no attention given to other ways of being, Seurat suggests that greater disasters are set to unfold. This study sees that historically, governmental responses have tried to contain problems<sup>92</sup> and shift outcomes to benefit their own interests<sup>93</sup> rather than, for example, facilitating social change to meaningfully transform the whole arrangement.

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91 For an analysis of the aims and interests and limits of the financialization of climate change, see Leonardi (2017).

92 See Foucault (2007), Esposito (2011).

93 See Klein (2008).

Seurat suggests that what is needed are narrative-based responses that provide other ways to live through an “absence of future [that] has already begun.” (40)

To this end, Seurat quotes Donna Haraway, saying that humanity could stand “being in mud” more. (47) Being in the mud implies a reconsideration of worldly and multilayered human relations in order to find creative solutions to problems that far exceed the limited frame of finance. Seurat connects to anthropologist Barbara Glowczewski’s (47) focus upon the universally native nature of humanity, that humanity is always indigenous to the earth (and in the mud).

For Agamben, the *whatever* does not provide a narrative framework for possible political action. Rather, his contention is that the ambivalence and possibility of *whatever* helps people recognize that muddiness is the general situation of being particularly embedded in the world that is conceptually rearrangeable through the plasticity of social relation and meaning.<sup>94</sup> *Whatever* is indifferent; it is merely the shared space for abstract thought, planning and theoretical spectatorship. As the condition of possibility of narrativity, it allows for abstract contemplation of social translation across difference.<sup>95</sup> Agamben (1993) translates *whatever* from the Latin *quod libet*, meaning, “being such that it always matters.” (1) That is, what matters in *whatever* object are all the things it autonomously possesses in addition to all that might universally strive to translate it. In that way, while being in the mud and relating to *whatever* objects of the world matters, *whatever* being also points out that simply being properly muddy and in dialogue with *whatever* has particular orientations, so that it also matters how its meanings get expressed.

The following are two examples of cultural thought in relation to political situations.

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94 “*Whatever* is singularity insofar as it relates not (only) to the concept, but (also) to the idea. This relation does not found a new class, but is, in each class, that which draws singularity from its synonymy, from its belonging to a class, not towards any absence of name or belonging, but toward the name itself, towards a pure and anonymous homonymy.” (Agamben 2007 76)

95 “This has nothing to do with the simple affirmation of the social in opposition to the State that has often found expression in the protest movements of recent years. *Whatever* singularities cannot form a *societas* because they do not possess any identity to vindicate nor any bond of belonging for which to seek recognition.” (Agamben 85–86)

Both situations work through *whatever* concepts and demonstrate how *whatever* thought is orientationally policed, and thus narratively driven towards particular universal meanings. One example is drawn from anthropology, the other from art.

### **3a Universality, narrativizing abstract governance**

When discussing the simple matter of human survival in response to crisis, anthropologist Glowczewski's (2015) *Resisting The Disaster: Between Exhaustion and Creation* is clear – humans survive disaster. “Survival responses exist everywhere, and the collective intelligence that leads to micro-social experiments is a wave of hope for the world.” (2) Glowczewski focuses on art and law, two things that open up survivability by connecting the universal to particular contexts. “[W]hat is at stake here is to find the force of life that will spark a response to the deadly force of destruction that threatened the group.” (11)

Glowczewski demonstrates how nominated cultural concepts provide frame and spark for sociality to relate with and through crisis situations in order to transform them. She describes how cultural things “spark a response to the deadly force of destruction that threatened the group” (11) and can vibrantly reformulate pre-existing order to allow for different ways of being. Glowczewski interrogates different places where the terrain for human activity has been foreclosed upon in the vise of ecological disaster and financialization:

As I here try to show that one cannot separate natural catastrophes from social disasters, emergency policies from long-term ones, knowledge of the present from historical memories, humanitarian responses from the agency of victims, I believe that anthropology is particularly called to engage in analyses that consider all those relations in a critical way in order to trigger local and global reflection towards new social alternatives. (19)

In thinking through how individual and community practice and consciousness is reorganized, Glowczewski refers to Gregory Bateson and focuses on Felix Guattari's *Three Ecologies* (2014). Through these thinkers she describes a rhythm of human-relational creativity that works with culture to help restore balanced negotiations with the

cosmic world comprised of “rain, wind, fire, tsunami, climate excess, etc.” (5) To demonstrate this, she surveys several communities’ situated efforts to realign how they relate to the natural and socio-political world via *whatever*: for example in an effort to affirmatively reorganize themselves after a volcanic eruption she points to an Indonesian community's cultural resilience, described in terms familiar to anthropology.<sup>96</sup> Next, she identifies how contemporary art helps a Brazilian community respond to exposure to radioactivity.<sup>97</sup> (5–8) This anecdote demonstrates the social capacity of artwork to narrativize and heal emotional wounds. This study similarly affirms art’s capacity to heal, and considers Guattari’s schizoanalytic cartographies to be analytically useful.<sup>98</sup>

Yet, at the expense of the communities facing situational challenges, her examples of what and who does meaningful relational crisis work expands situationally outward towards the universal. For example, she traces the rise and fall of a community’s prosperity along the Bamako-Dakar train line; after an initially prosperous period the community decayed when the line was privatized at the hands of a multinationals. She follows the area’s possible resurrection as a tourist destination through solidarity aid from European trade unions and culturally-minded NGO’s. (9–11) Glowczewski expresses hope that regional, national and international laws are capable of coordinating with the needs of wrongly dispossessed populations. But Glowczewski swerves towards universal

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96 “The latter [the village] had been completely destroyed by the seismic activity of the Merapi volcano in May 2006, following the tsunami that had struck their island two years before. The villagers called on to their [NGO’s] responsibility should another earthquake and volcanic eruption occur, but thought it could be prevented if they kept on making offerings to the volcano and living at its base. They completely rebuilt their village using the systems inherited from collective solidarity (traditionally mobilized to irrigate the fields) as well as by inventing a new ways of working together.” (Glowczewski 2015 5)

97 “During the South American Biennale, held in 2005 in Porto Alegre, the internationally renowned artist Cirone Di Franco exposed an installation of hospital beds made of blue concrete, each one bearing the imprint of a body or of an object signifying the personality of the victims of radioactivity. In those individual traces, he crystallized the collective memory of his city, which was reshaped by that disastrous event.” (Glowczewski 6–7)

98 See Guattari (2014, 1995). Guattari’s schizoanalytic cartography describes a non-linear model of healing creative activity, cycling between four nodes of human-autopoietic capacities in relation between routine, invention, application and decay.



theology when suggesting that art generated in the height of crisis has “possibilities that redeem human condition” even if it can’t help those in the context of crisis itself. This Hegelian<sup>99</sup> turn (12) seems to create a system of pure relationality – where the particularities of life are superseded by the universal abstract benefits of art and legal thought.<sup>100</sup> Rather than remaining within the territory where life must be lived and can be reorganized even in relation to these abstract concepts,<sup>101</sup> Glowczewski affirms a universality contingent on no particular situation but universality, and on anthropology’s conception of a universal humanity, rather than on the particular communities’ terms.<sup>102</sup> A cultural policy of the multitude stays with the variation of any particular multitude, for as Glowczewski initially suggests, this multitude is cued into its own relational horizons rather than the general horizons of a general multitude whose cultural orientation can be understood as skewing towards narrativizable universal concepts that serve professional interests as much as those of the particular realm.

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99 Glowczewski’s (2015) narrative traces a path of particular situations where particular life becomes consecutively more unlivable. Rather than turning to politics or the creativity of embodied social organization, she turns towards abstractions of fine art and literature.

“But when the collective installation in the place of revival is hindered, the transmissions start crumbling down, culture is lost and, most of all, the collective life is threatened once again, notably in its ethical aspect. The power of action does not have a collective field of expression any longer: the existential territory erodes, there is no projection anymore, and no creation is possible. However, precisely when this exhaustion hits rock bottom, it becomes the source of a new hope. Weren’t many beautiful French and Russian literary texts born in the midst of late 20th century melancholy?” (12)

100 “However, precisely when this exhaustion hits rock bottom, it becomes the source of a new hope. Weren’t many beautiful French and Russian literary texts born in the midst of late 20th century melancholy? Didn’t the suffering of the colonized, the deported and of the soldiers of so many wars generate countless novels and films in the southern hemisphere or among the diasporas of the 20th century?” (2015 12)

101 “I believe that anthropology is particularly called to engage in analyses that consider all those relations in a critical way in order to trigger local and global reflection towards new social alternatives.”(Glowczewski 2015 19)

102 The epigraph, a quote from Chakrabarty (2009) reads, “Climate change poses the question of a human community, of a *we*; it points to a figure of universality that escapes our capacity to experience the world. This universality stems rather from the shared sense of a catastrophe. It calls for a global approach of politics, but without the myth of global identity, for, unlike the Hegelian universe, it cannot comprise particularities. We could temporarily refer to it as a *negative universal* history.”

### **3b Nominating abstraction from the terrain of life**

Though his work highlights North American and European political artists, media activist, and theorists,<sup>103</sup> Art historian Yates McKee (2016) embeds the narration of *Contemporary Art and the Post-Occupy Condition* within the social stream of New York's activist movements. In that way, it is different than Glowczewski's study that telescopes into situations across the globe. The main section of McKee's work focuses on Occupy Wall Street, the relatively heterogeneous protest movement that staged protest camps throughout the United States and Western Europe between 2010 and 2013. The camps occupied public spaces through a variety of legal and extralegal tactics.<sup>104</sup> Famous for not having specific demands, its concerns emerged out of questions of general social precarity in the face of formal governmental activity/inactivity. Rather than an analysis of its concrete social composition or political successes, McKee works through Occupy to describe, "the unknown possibilities and impassioned energies it unleashes for the present." (19) The possibilities that McKee is interested in are those that create the space for a common public life that is "at odds with current forms of state power as well as fantasies of 'the people' as an all-inclusive harmonious consensus." (20)

To these ends, McKee traces a variety of notable artistic, mediatic and theoretical manifestations<sup>105</sup> that occurred before, during and after Occupy. The great extent of actual relations between the art world and the event of Occupy justifies McKee's focus.

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103 The title of Yates McKee's first chapter is "Contemporary Art and the Politics of Democracy, 1987 – 2011" (2016 37–83) and additional critical and artistic work by McKee in the context of *The Journal of Aesthetics & Protest* appears within this chapter.

104 For an expanded conversation on how zoning laws and protest in relation to Occupy and beyond, see Shiffman et al. (2012).

105 Though contemporary work on the topic is more critical, Nicolas Bourriaud's seminal *Relational Aesthetics* succinctly describes the task of much contemporary socially relational work in response to concepts like Debord's spectacle: "These days, communications are plunging human contact into monitored areas that divide the social bond up into (quite) different products. Artistic activity, for its part, strives to achieve modest connections, open up (One or two) obstructed passages, and connect levels of reality kept apart from one another." (Bourriaud 2009 8).

McKee makes explicit the compositional, ideational and intellectual support that Occupy received from artists<sup>106</sup> and art institutions, and poses interesting questions for the art world. (82) McKee details how the movement leveraged the social capital of respected and canonical artists that participated in the movement (119 and 125) in an effort to secure and expand Occupy's general interests.<sup>107</sup> McKee's conceptualization of the relation between art and politics is indebted to Rancière and his notion of the "partition of the sensible". For McKee, the sensible means, "what is seeable, hearable and sayable as legitimately political in a given social order. Rancière understand politics as the opening of a void of possibility in the partition of the sensible wherein new political subjects emerge in excess of the "police principle". (14) In this logic, Occupy stands as a meaningful, democratic stage for presenting legitimately political projects.

Discussing artwork done in advance of Occupy, McKee highlights "social practice artwork" whose aesthetico-political utility is, in the first instance, manifest in its capacities to motivate and socially interact with specific viewers in time.<sup>108</sup> He details *Camp Campaign*, a 2006 video made by New York City-based artists and organizers Rene Gabri and Ayreen Anastas. *Camp Campaign* lyrically documents Anastas and Gabri's cross-country drift, stopping at a variety of campgrounds, prisons and community spaces in order to "test out Agamben's thesis that 'the camp is the nomos of the modern' ".<sup>109</sup> (82) McKee sees their camp project exceeding "the politics of democracy," and

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106 McKee details the role that artists (for example: *Not an Alternative*, *The Illuminator*, Amin Hussain and Nitasha Dhillon, Josh MacPhee, Molly Crabapple, Phillip Glass and Laurie Anderson) played in developing Occupy's communicative strategies and their particular successes in pushing forward its general agenda. For example, he recounts the *Illuminator* whose surprise first appearance as a "bat signal" projected above an Occupy march took advantage of aesthetic strategies of disruption. (114–115)

107 See for example McKee 2016, p.125, where he discusses the efforts of Lou Reed and Phillip Glass to "leverage" their celebrity status in effort to secure a space for Occupy.

108 Rather than posing theoretical questions as an expository manner within confined space, the object of social practice artwork places *whatever* in social play within a more open social situation. Art historian Grant Kester (2013) describes the ability of social practice to aesthetically forward "the modulations of agency, the moments of creative insight and stasis, and the ways in which the participants accommodated or challenged the authority of state or public agencies."

109 This is in reference to final chapter of Agamben's (1998) book *Homo Sacer* "The camp is the

finds that its concerns and manifestations are an “uncanny prophecy of a different kind of camp campaign that would unfurl several years later at Wall Street.” (83) With Swiss social practice artist Thomas Hirschhorn, McKee finds another forerunner to Occupy’s precarious staging. He observes the different ways in which Hirschhorn’s<sup>110</sup> work and Occupy’s actual encampment reference precarity; Hirschhorn’s as simulacra produced by “leading institutions,” while Occupy itself articulates “precarity in a very different manner, albeit one with its own aesthetic and symbolic logic. The camp comprised finite human bodies and perishable architectural structures rendered from materials scavenged from the urban environment.” (107)

Within the internal tumult of Occupy, McKee traces the autonomous development of certain artistic projects completed by professional artists and collectives in association with the movement. To narrativize the value of individual artistic practitioners working within movements, McKee references a panoply of philosophical concepts and other artists. Referring to Occupy’s General Assembly that tried to coordinate these constitutive forces, McKee (2016) writes, “As a technical apparatus of democratic decision making at a large scale, however, it was notoriously dysfunctional, and indeed many of the significant decisions made during the occupation were crafted by smaller groups of influencers who would then either generalize their vision through various means, or simply undertake their work autonomously.” (110)<sup>111</sup> Perhaps in effort to deal with the

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nomos of the modern” (166–180).

110 McKee describes Hirschhorn’s work as a simulacra of precarity and says his social space-cum-informal philosophical monuments presage Occupy’s precarious thematics, cardboard aesthetics and zoning concerns. Papastergiadis’ (2014 98) characterization of Hirschhorn’s work demonstrates a similar reflection on his aesthetic: “an installation of functional sculptures made from common materials such as cardboard and duct tape, as well as the staging of discussions, lectures, poetry readings and impromptu performances.”

111 McKee comes around to connect the precarity that Occupy stood for to the general system of social reproduction today. He suggests that Occupy Wall Street’s encampment was a “common household” (109), capable of opening the conceptual horizons of its attendees to the vision of a commonly organized alternative world.

McKee (2016 101) references the definition of biopolitics cited in *Protest Camps* by geographers and sociologists Ana Feigenbaum, Fabian Frenzel and Patrick McCurdy (2013) who propose that the social reproduction necessarily occurring in a camp (its kitchens, sanitary requirements, mental health care etc...) present in situ a politicizing assemblage capable of

unwieldy nature of its collectivity, the concept of Occupy as a noun, verb, and event (20–25) seems to be the work’s final organizing concept. He narrates conceptual and artistic bits and pieces as grammars that make conceptual or actual appearance to him over the course of his activist engagement.

As Chapter 2 of this study discusses, the art history to which McKee attends runs parallel with society, from which it is distinct. McKee’s text nominates sets of actors and concepts that he as an art historian and activist finds interesting. While Occupy appears as his milieu, it is equally the conceptual play of art history to which his interests are attuned. Glowczewski does a similar thing, by addressing a universal conversation of anthropology. Conversely, this study’s cultural policy of the multitude is grounded in and organized for particularly situated socialities working with the problems where life is lived. That is, rather than tending to the universality of anthropology or art history, this study attends to the universal multitude. Following through with this requires something other than generated stories and enumerated concepts; it requires a studied look at how, generally, multitudinous being exists between itself and its own possible horizons and the governing forces that intimately mediate these two things.

#### **4 Governance: things we carry on our backs**

Like Occupy Wall Street, the PAH utilizes aesthetic strategies, albeit with a different ethic

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prefiguring ‘alternative worlds’.

For McKee, the nomos of the camp is its ability to stage biopolitical relationships. Through his citation of *Protest Camp* (2013), McKee’s use of the term biopolitics seems to work with Hardt and Negri’s understanding of biopolitics as the polarized capacities for governments to organize either emancipatory and repressive modes for social reproduction. Hardt and Negri see biopower in a manner equivalent to Agamben, though they pose biopolitics as having a radically affirmative potential. Describing the Zapatistas and the Palestinian Intifada, they write, “Their center is their resistance to domination and their protest against poverty or, in positive terms, their struggle for a democratic organization of the biopolitical commons.” (Hardt and Negri 2004 89).

McKee posits how Occupy’s “household” was visibly maintained through necessary, but unglamorous, reproductive kitchen and cleaning labor that he identifies as “feminist”. He further observes, however, that “it would be a mistake to imply that the ‘household’ of the occupation was inherently a feminist space; as was the case with anti-racism, any significant feminist empowerment that did occur was uneven, and hard-won through persistent struggle by women over the internal ‘partition of the sensible’ of the movement itself.” (109)

of creative practice: Occupy characterized itself as a “movement of movements” that may have measured its effectiveness on its appearance through the media, while the PAH has at its heart an ongoing and implicitly anti-capitalist practice of providing people with shelter despite legal structures and dispositifs. Thus, the PAH finds relative success not by appearing politically but by shifting notions at the core of the human organization so as to reshape how people socially access shelter.

Debt and the financial industry around which the PAH decomposes social relations does not appear “natural” in the common sense of the word; common sense understands financial debt and human governance as human creations. This study affirms that all that occurs is natural; moreover, insofar as the multitude experiences finance as a life-defining force that is mostly beyond its control, finance’s effects share much with other natural forces that cause structural crisis: floods, disease, food shortage, etc. Like a flood, debt drives people from their homes; like disease, debt has bodily effects. The economy is a governing force in similar ways that floods and disease are; they are phenomena, or organize phenomena, and produce a focused array of effects and outcomes.

In order to articulate how the multitude tautologically collaborates with itself in self-governance with these and other phenomenon, it is useful to discuss historic conceptualizations of governance. Through different manners, both Hobbes and Spinoza consider human-organized things and the multitude as natural forces in relation to governmentality. In their conceptualizations of governing systems, both Hobbes and Spinoza consider the multitude; by this fact the multitude’s behavior can be seen in some way to determine their conceptualizations. Hobbes wants to contain the multitude while Spinoza utilizes its ethic as the logic for its systemic development.

Published in 1651, Thomas Hobbes’s *Leviathan* (1929) is recognized as foundational to contemporary Western political thought. In it, Hobbes lays a theoretical groundwork for what has become the sovereign/citizen and state/citizen relation. *Leviathan* begins with a methodological discussion of his observations of nature in order to explain how natural functions serve to systematize and energize his ideal state. In its utilization of natural

forces, Hobbes conceptualizes the state as an automaton, that he names either “the commonwealth” or Leviathan. “Nature (the Art whereby God hath made and governes the world) is by the Art of man, as in many other things, so in this also imitated, that it can make an Artificial Animal.” (8)

The human faculty that allows for the state’s creation, identified by Hobbes as that which distinguishes the human from other species, is the language God gifted to Adam – this gift:

whereby men register their Thoughts; recall them when they are past; and also declare them on to each other for mutual utility and conversation; without which there had been amongst men, neither Common-wealth nor Society nor contract, nor Peace, no more than amongst Lyons, Bears and Wolves. (24)

Without Commonwealth, the multitude lives in a state of nature. Hobbes famously describes the state of nature as a “warre of every one against every one,” (99) where by natural right all have the right to everything. Hobbes considers everything within nature as perfect; as there is no law to divine what is good or bad activity, everything is simply a multitudinous battle of the right to possess. Nevertheless, within nature individuals can learn and construct ideas and projects that prove over time to be functional for individual human interests, or not. The same project-nature of man holds true within Hobbes’s artificial-in-nature Commonwealth. In this constructed world of men, people are capable of error and fault, the multitude can be judged to have acted with good or bad intent. In Commonwealth, people make covenant with the sovereign to live outside of nature’s brutal state so as to live without the fear of violence. When under such a contract the multitude exchanges its wildness with the sovereign for the natural rights afforded all men; this is the liberty granted by the sovereign. In Commonwealth, all citizens live in covenant with sovereign power under agreements enforced by the ruler’s sword.

“Liberty, or Freedome, signifieth (properly) the absence of Opposition; (by Opposition, I mean external Impediments of motion)”. (161) Liberty is the right to live in peace under the sovereign and to live according to laws that subjects should expect the sovereign to

enforce – being able to expect the sovereign’s action is to the citizen’s benefit. Liberty ensures that the sovereign will enforce any legally binding plans and contracts that citizens make under law; through the law and stability that the sovereign provides, property and inheritances are preserved. Liberty guarantees that if contracts and covenants are broken or in dispute, a citizen can sue and have arguments peaceably settled. Within Commonwealth, all activities are the subject of judgment, legal or otherwise. Within and beyond the realm of Commonwealth, where actions are not under covenant and contract, citizens are within their natural right to act as they see fit. In this way, liberty ensures the wealth of the commonwealth, as it allows for the pursuit of private and common interests within and beyond the domain.

Much has been made of the inverse relation between Spinoza and Hobbes’s conception of the multitude,<sup>112</sup> and also between that of Spinoza and others, such as Hegel, whose formal interests connecting law and culture align with those of Hobbes.<sup>113</sup> Balibar states that Spinoza must have been familiar with Hobbes’s work – and that in the moment of authoring *Tractatus Politicus*, his most politically prescriptive work, Spinoza may have been seen as sharing innovative governmental concepts with Hobbes (2007 54). Nevertheless, a key difference between Hobbes and Spinoza’s conceptualization of the state is that Spinoza “explicitly rejects the distinction between ‘natural right’ and ‘civil right’, along with the concepts of the ‘social contract’ and ‘representation’.” (56) These are meaningful differences, even while both states structure relationships at a variety of organizational and logistical scales. The nature/culture divide sets a chasm between Hobbes’s Commonwealth and the rest of the world; by rejecting differences between civil and natural rights, Spinoza’s state stands ambivalently upon Hobbes’s ontological line. This matter of difference shows them to have highly contrasting relations to the multitude. Hobbes’s *Leviathan* logistically holds back the multitude within the state of nature and confines the multitude within through fallible but enforceable law. For Spinoza, all human activity and possible relations exist as natural; to say that one man innately has more right than another would, to him, seem illogical.

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112 See for example, Balibar (2008), Agamben (2007).

113 See for example Macherey (2011).



Though a sovereign rules Commonwealth, political scientist Popp-Madsen (2014) notes that Hobbes's model, with its propositional schism between nature and man, initiates a transition from sovereign to biopolitical rule. Rather than just ruling, the covenant makes the sovereign ever more responsible to relations that support and maintain life in particular states. In this relation, biological power, knowledge and the concept of the state merge, as states strive to provide more and better things than nature.<sup>114</sup> The process of becoming citizen is an "anthropological machine" (50) through which citizens become beings endowed with particularly human duties attendant to the demands of sovereignty and law. This human may come to appear as the natural human through the nomination of their being "culturally human"; further cultural interventions maintain and manage particular behaviours for their utility to state affairs. With the sword of the state protecting property and contractual relation by cultural intervention, multitudinous action is conceptually isolated within, or excluded by, legal and biological frameworks stretched over a complex of other fixable relations. Under the logic that the state is composed of replaceable parts, the blame for the failure to pay rent, as results in homelessness within a system of legal claims and agreements, rests squarely upon the debtor.

Spinoza sees the naturalness of the world in chains of relations rather than as isolatable systems – the adequacy of any system can be confirmed by the extent to which it brings joy.

For the bounds of nature are not the laws of human reason, which do but pursue the true interest and preservation of mankind, but other infinite laws, which regard the eternal order of universal nature, whereof man is an atom; and according to the necessity of this order only are all individual beings determined in a fixed

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<sup>114</sup> Popp-Madsen (2014) says, "The simplicity and clearness of the Hobbesian models lies in man's transcendence of his flawed animal life and attainment of a qualified, political life." Madsen continues with a quote by Italian critical theorist, Norberto Bobbio, "*For Hobbes, the state is one of these machines produced by human beings in order to compensate for the shortcomings of nature, and to replace the deficient products of nature with a product of human ingenuity*" (51)

manner to exist and operate.<sup>115</sup> (Spinoza 1951 295–296)

While Hobbes's state preserves order as an experiment in judgment for the sake of an abstract fixity,<sup>116</sup> Spinoza sees the multitude as capable of building up states of things for its interests, until what they structure fails. Spinoza's ideal state is constructed upon relational affirmation and trust. So, if the biopolitical is understood as the power of the sovereign to "foster life or disallow it to the point of death" (Foucault 1990 138) it is debatable whether within Dominion biopolitics is an applicable concept. With Spinoza's conceptualization, it would be proper to say only that through Dominion particular life is supported to the extent that it is by tending to its networks of relationality.

Within Spinoza's schema, if a state affronted its existing compositional relations, this state would bring itself to ruin. (Spinoza 1951 311) A great state is one that makes clear its core interdependencies and interests so that all within can act with an awareness of the entire system. This state is governed through particular relationality across all its territory rather than just through its leader. Only by misunderstanding the nature of its composition can such a reasonable state act in error. Errors are those that ask for relations to fulfill what they cannot; "If, for instance, I say that I can rightfully do what I will with this table, I do not certainly mean, that I have the right to make it eat grass." (310) The multitude's forgivable errors within such a state are equally and inconsequentially foolish.

As stated above, a precept of this study is that when cultural workers act, formally speaking, they are not a part of the multitude. This study's given definition of a cultural worker is someone who considers their activities or work to be relationally meaningful to

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115 Balibar (2007 51) notes Spinoza's heresy of suggesting that the bible was not a sacred history. He identifies the heresy as one based on the idea that concepts lead history, not God: "History is now subordinate to theory, for which it provides both a field of investigation and a source of illustrations. It is no longer the directional framework whose irreversible 'moments; inscribe the constraints within which politics has to Operate."

116 Latour (1993) demonstrates how Hobbes orders scientific and social science's facts under the politics of sovereign representation so as to preserve pre-existing order despite any revolutionary innovation that such scientific facts might suggest.

others. Under these terms both Hobbes and Spinoza can be seen as cultural workers whose conceptualizations are in relation to but not properly of the multitude. Virno (2004) reads *Leviathan* as Hobbes's timely response to the horrors unleashed by the passions of the multitude during the English Civil War. (22–23) Spinoza, whose affinity with the multitude is clear, writes his philosophical treatises in immediate relation to the struggles of the emergent Dutch Republic.<sup>117</sup> Therefore, both philosophers' work can be said to place the multitude in particular rhetorical relation to governance. Hobbes rhetorically narrativizes new relations (people as governed citizens) against the multitude. Spinoza rhetorically demonstrates how the multitudes can relationally compose themselves under certain governmental conditions. Both demonstrate rhetorical variation contingent to the multitude's tautological capacities for self-governance. Cultural thoughts' varying rhetorical approaches to governance are a constant throughout the thesis and are multitude<sup>118</sup> – here what must be recognized is that neither Hobbes nor Spinoza offer an objective description of the relationship between the multitude and governance; this study turns to political theorist Paolo Virno for its definition.

In general, this study finds little use for Virno's (2004) distinction between the people and the multitude, where people are subject-citizens of a state and the multitude comprised of schizophrenic actors in governance's eyes. Yet below, in a quote from *Multitude Between Innovation and Negation* (2008), it is put to good use when articulating the relation between the many of the multitude and the one of governance:

The 'many' introduce uncertainty into the public sphere, and also the undifferentiated potential of the animal that, being deprived of an environmental niche, is open to the world. We know that the multitude is opposed to the people,

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117 "These aims were also those of the social groups with whom Spinoza was, of his own will, most closely associated during his lifetime; foremost among them, the governing elite of the Dutch Republic. For in fact this elite had by then begun to describe itself as a 'freedom party'. It had grown out of a national liberation struggle. It championed civil liberties against a monarchist conception of the State similar to that which currently held sway over 'absolutist' Europe. It defended freedom of individual conscience, the autonomy of scientific research and scholarship, and (up to a certain point) the free circulation of ideas." (Balibar 2008 3)

118 As will be discussed throughout this study, while this study finds that Spinoza informs many key concepts of this study, to ignore the reality of what law in governance has structured is to condemn billions more to short lives and painful deaths.

to their “one will.” It would be a mistake, however, to believe that the multitude can dispose of the One as such. The exact opposite is true: the political existence of the “many” in as much as the word “many” presupposes something of a community, is rooted in a homogeneous and shared environment, and stands out against an impersonal background. The One, from which the “many” becomes a community, is certainly not state sovereignty. Rather, it is the conglomerate of species-specific faculties (verbal thought, cognitive aptitudes, imagination, the ability to learn, etc.) that the history of big industry has tossed onto center stage, to the point of making these faculties the genuine mainstay of modern production. We might say: the One which the *many* always carry on their backs coincides in many aspects with the transindividual reality that Marx called *general intellect* or “social brain”. The *general intellect* is the name that refers to the ordinary human faculty of thinking with words, and this, in turn, becomes the principal productive force of mature capitalism. (Virno 2008 41)

If the multitude can also be understood as that which precedes and exceeds any form of governance but is necessary to its composition, then any governmental One which the multitude carries on its back are the things that dispossess humanity but are also needed (whether useful or imposed) in the process of relating in self-governance. The “conglomerate of species-specific faculties” are, in the logic of this study, much more than directly governmental systems but are also other dispositifs working through design objects, concepts, food, the climate – *whatever* things that the multitude can conceptually carry or be burdened by in the continued relational practice of being human in the world.

For this cultural policy, what is of particular interest is the ambivalent relation between the multitude and formal governance. It can be said that rather than being ambivalent to governance, McKee and Glowczewski amplify governmental logics by following abstract thought’s interests through multitudinous contexts. A cultural policy of the multitude takes ambivalence to governance as a norm, by recognizing that it is the multitude’s effects that matter. In this time of climate change, this cultural policy does not aim to dispel ambiguity around governance – rather it hopes to provide grounds for

continued governmental variation, through a variety of cultural works that inform the particular sociality of the multitude for its own tautological self-governance.

The specificity of what sort of ambiguous variation the project hopes to culturally support is informed by the study's analysis of multitudinous capacities for self-governance, modeled through the PAH, and also by contemplating the realities of a changing climate change—discussed in Chapter 2 through *Dark Mountain*.

## Chapter 2

### **On the Dark Mountain: Cultural Management in Abstraction**

Rather than writing about the end of humanity full stop, the *Dark Mountain* Project writes about a particular civilizational formulation; “This time, the crumbling empire is the unassailable global economy, and the brave new world of consumer democracy being forged worldwide in its name.” (Hine & Kingsnorth 2014 4) Their focus is on the end of a Western Civilization, though they see collapse as a general trope. “What war correspondents and relief workers report is not only the fragility of the fabric, but the speed with which it can unravel.” (ibid.) What distinguishes *Dark Mountain* from other environmental and ecological projects in the eyes of this study are their claims to be working with an acknowledgement of the realities of what is to come with climate change, and that their work is non-political. The mundane fact that they continue to publish over a period of time to articulate their perspective makes it a relatively rich archive to work with, as well. This study has no other claims regarding *Dark Mountains*’ exemplary status – these facts are good enough.

This chapter first demonstrates the scope and situation of climate change in the eyes of governance, looking at the 2014 report issued by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (the IPCC) ahead of the 2015 Paris climate summit. This demonstration is then echoed with *Dark Mountain Journal* culturally situated response to these global governing structures. The chapter’s theoretical investigation then broadens to interrogate multiple conceptualizations of the term “culture” in order to begin evaluating what a cultural response to climate change might look like and how *Dark Mountain*’s project fits into this evaluation. From there, guided both by *Dark Mountain*’s critical interests and this study’s interrogation, the chapter looks at Kant and Hegel’s conceptualizations of the Enlightenment and the political ramifications of the Enlightenment cultural formations through which the “non-political” project of *Dark Mountain* is evaluated. Because by chapter’s end *Dark Mountain* proves to be an unsatisfactory guide, this study briefly looks for other ways to think through what is meaningful within cultural work, guided by feminist, post-colonial and autonomist Marxist precepts. Throughout this chapter, as is fitting for a literary analysis, *Dark Mountain* excerpts are presented at some length. This

is so the reader might have a sense of the journal's variety of approaches and voices.

## **1. Climate change**

### **1a IPCC and the scale of what is manageable**

The latest (and fifth) assessment<sup>119</sup> of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was released in 2014. The IPCC was organized by the United Nations as the international body to study the facts and effects of climate change and its implications for policy and economy. The IPCC's (2014) *Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability for Policy Makers* lays out impacts attributed to climate change, broken down in terms of physical systems (including impacts on glaciers, snow, ice and permafrost melt, bodies of water and drought, and coastal and sea-level effects), biological systems (including terrestrial and marine ecosystems, wildfire cycles) and human and human-managed systems (in food production, and within livelihoods, health and/or economics). Wading through the document's sober analysis does not minimize the chill of such lines as: "Climate change can be expected to affect the world's human population. Severe climate change might even lead to a catastrophic collapse of the population, and even to the extinction of human beings." (IPCC wg. 3 chapter 4 223)<sup>120</sup> This study understands extinction as within the realm of the possible in the Chthulucene, but as will be discussed, approaches death as an ongoing effect in relation to life rather than as a dramatic and singular end-point.

The report details climate change's regional variation and how it bears down differently upon the scales contingent to current global socio-political orders. Its overall analysis is conclusive: "Human interference with the climate system is occurring, and climate change poses risks for human and natural systems." (IPCC 2014, wg. 2, 3) It is a multidisciplinary report, authored by a large group of international academics, covering a wide range of topics – from geophysics to ethics – in an effort to grasp the scope of the global situation. One chapter begins with the following discussion:

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119 The IPCC's sixth assessment is scheduled to be released in 2020, according to their website: <http://wg1.ipcc.ch/AR6/AR6.html>.

120 This study uses the IPCC's referencing system.

This section explores the determinants of Sustainable Development, emphasizing how each influence the extent to which societies can balance the economic, social, and environmental pillars of sustainable development, while highlighting potential synergies and tradeoffs for the building of mitigative and adaptive capacity and the realization of effective and equitable mitigation and adaptation strategies. (IPCC 2014, wg. 3 chapter 4 296)

The chapter moves towards policy suggestions, and its conclusions seem to portend the non-binding though monumental 2015 Paris Climate agreement. “Some analysts argue that the legacy of development and interrelated issues of equity so cloud global climate negotiations that ad hoc agreements and voluntary pledges are the most that can be achieved.”(IPCC wg. 3 chapter 4 297) The enormous scope of the IPCC’s research project seems also to portend this policy outcome; tasked as a research and policy group, they seem lost in the weeds of research. If the climate crisis is as dire as it seems, how could the IPCC’s inability to come up with direct responses to this threat be seen as anything but a failure of its particular governing bodies? While the 2015 Paris summit’s acknowledgement of climate change’s reality, and its statements regarding the need for collective responsibility for its future impacts is laudable, what seems to also have been achieved in Paris 2015 is a deflection of responsibility from egregious carbon-contributors.

Another policy discussion within the 2014 report summarizes debates on ways policy alters human behavior along the interested line of sustainable development. Disregarding the reports’ prioritization of sustainable development<sup>121</sup> over other approaches to climate change (such as simply agreeing to end fossil fuel extraction or severely limiting its use tout court), this IPCC chapter (2014, wg. 3 chapter 4) looks at human behavior and what tools can be employed to effect it over time. The IPCC identifies several levers to alter behavior, including a narrative on values;<sup>122</sup>

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121 For one of the many discussions regarding the limits of sustainable development discourse, see Lippert (2004).

122 “The relevance of values to sustainable development and, particularly, to ecologically



Values have been defined as “enduring beliefs that pertain to desirable end states or behaviors, transcend specific situations, guide selection or evaluation of behavior and events and are ordered by importance.” Values provide “guides for living the best way possible for individuals, social groups and cultures’ and so influence actions at all levels of society – including the individual, the household, the firm, civil society, and government. Individuals acquire values through socialization and learning experience and values thus relate to many of the other determinants discussed in this section. Values may be rooted in cultural, religious, and other belief systems, which may sometimes conflict with scientific understandings of environmental risks. In particular, distinct values may influence perceptions and interpretations of climate impacts and hence climate responses.” (IPCC wg. 3 chapter 4 299–300)

Strikingly measured, given the report's ecological focus, is its discussion regarding the value of natural systems and non-human organisms:

It is very difficult to measure non-human values in a way that makes them commensurate with human values. Economists address this issue by dividing value into use value (associated with actual use of nature – instrumental value) and nonuse or existence value (intrinsic value of nature). As an example, biodiversity might have value because of the medical drugs that might be discovered among the diverse biota (use value). Or biodiversity might be valued by individuals simply because they believe that biologic diversity is important, over and above any use to people that might occur. The total amount people are willing to pay has sometimes been used as an economic measure of the total value (instrumental and intrinsic) of these features. As the discussion of the past few paragraphs has suggested, nature may have additional value, over and above the

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conscious (consumer) behavior, is related to the nature of environmental issues as ‘social dilemmas’, where short-term narrow individual interests conflict with the longer term social interest. Researchers have highlighted the role of non-selfish values that promote the welfare of others (including nature), noting that some but not all indigenous societies are known to focus on ‘collective’ as opposed to ‘individual’ interests and values, which often result in positive resource conservation strategies and wellbeing.” (IPCC wg. 3 chapter 4 300)

values placed by individual humans. (IPCC wg. 3 chapter 3 220–221)

Given the IPCC study’s global scope and measured tone, it is not surprising that so few levers for behavioral change are directly named:

[B]ehavior experiments suggest there is no ‘silver bullet’ for fostering ecologically conscious behavior, as favorable actions (e. g., to conserve energy) are triggered by different stimuli, including information, regulation or economic rewards, and influenced by the nature of the issue itself. (IPCC wg. 3 chapter 4 300)

Concurrent with a human-oriented conceptualization of governance, it is notable that nature’s “governmental” acts of flood, heat wave, famine and water shortage are mostly sidelined by policy discussions, creating an overall sense of a human-manageable world that can be crafted through voluntary pledges around carbon emissions, and abstract, poorly-defined promises for future action, despite the fact that these things and their effects are the very reason that climate change is important to governance.

### **1b Dark Mountain’s abstract responses**

Against all this, it is useful to read what the *Dark Mountain Journal*’s writers think about the current socio-political order and beyond.

*Dark Mountain* co-founder Paul Kingsnorth (2016) writes:

When I look at the state of the world right now, I see an arc bending towards something that dwarfs any parochial concerns about particular presidential elections or political arrangements between human nations, and which should put those events into deep perspective. I see a grand planetary shift that has not been seen for millions of years. I see that half the world’s wildlife has gone, and half the world’s forests, and half the world’s topsoil. I see that we have perhaps two generations of food left before we wear out the rest of that topsoil. I see 10 billion people needing to be fed. I see the highest concentration of carbon in the atmosphere since humans evolved. I see coming waves of political and cultural

turmoil resulting from all of this, which makes me fear for my children, and sometimes for myself.

*Dark Mountain's* art editor Charlotte Du Cann (2016) describes how she deals with the trauma resultant from this moment of change:

This alchemical moment has nothing to do with social justice, or environmentalism or any of the grassrootsy stuff I have found myself advocating during last decade. There are initiatives and networks around the world focusing on these worthy things, but none of this transforms anything if we are the same people inside, if we haven't dealt with our stuff – as we used to say in the '90s – if we haven't uncivilized ourselves, made contact with the layers of dead under our feet, in the sky, in the rivers. If we haven't stood with the Lakota, or with the yew trees, with the rainbow serpent, with the glacier, with the tawny owl. If we haven't found a way to dismantle the belief systems that keep us trapped in the cycles of history, if we haven't dealt with our insatiable desire for power and attention and found ways to live more lightly on the planet, we are not going to make it through this stage. And it is a 'we' because, in England at least, we are on a very crowded island and no matter how much we say we don't like our neighbors, they live next door.

Frequent *Dark Mountain* contributor and farmer/anthropologist Chris Smaje (2017) compares the care he gives to his farm to the care needed within the world in this time of change. Through caring, he finds systems that are both cyclical and linear, "Work gets done or it doesn't. Nature brings her own designs, full of gifts and challenges. The seasons swing around and the farm year takes shape out of all those little monologues." He continues:

But after this year, I see it differently. The further we progress towards fascism or other points on the compass of authoritarian nationalism the less traction we will have to do anything else that matters. I fear that in the past I've spent too much time worrying about climate change, energy crisis and the grand ecological realignments facing humanity, too much time embracing the certain end of the

existing order in the abstract, and not enough on giving myself to basic decencies that might see us through to somewhere else. Lofty disinterest made sense while our political economy reached the wild heights of its stalling point, but it won't serve for the fall.

Arch druid John Michael Geer (2017) discusses how to overcome the West's lack of an affirmative future-oriented imaginary capable of overcoming the climate crisis:

Though we're not going to the stars, in other words, our species will nonetheless be journeying to worlds stranger than any of our dreams. Instead of traveling through space, humanity has launched itself on a journey through time at the dizzying speed of sixty seconds every minute, and the destinations ahead will more than likely be entirely free of t-shirts, energy bars, iPhones, or the increasingly dreary and dysfunctional conventional wisdom of our age. To me, at least, that's an enticing prospect; while none of us can expect to see the worlds of deep time that await our species, we are at least free to dream – and perhaps even to take steps to see that as many of the useful legacies of our time make it through the impending crises of our age to the waiting hands of the deep future.

This wider rhetorical range of *Dark Mountain's* writers' considerations stands against the objective and rational climate politics of the IPCC. The IPCC is tasked with creating formally governmental responses to a particular global consensus of what constitutes the problems of climate change. That particular global consensus bends towards the interests of powerful states and international finance. *Dark Mountain* presents multitudinous thinking in relation to the problem, seemingly unfettered by but by no means ignorant of governance. Their thought is qualified as multitudinous because in relation to governance, it wanders as thought does rather than following governmental lines. Though multitudinous, it hardly represents all the thoughts of the multitude. It does not. The *Dark Mountain Journal* is just a tiny selection of all mental and social variation (multitudinous activity) contingent to the current socio-ecological crisis. Nevertheless, in its variation from law, *Dark Mountain's* writing provides a useful object from which to exact a level of critical awareness in order to determine what in culture might best help the multitude

in particular respond to the current socio-ecological-cultural crisis.

The next task of this chapter is to work through the conceptual utility of the sorts of abstract thought at play in projects like *Dark Mountain*. *Dark Mountain*'s work is deemed abstract because of how it is conceptually propositional: it proposes concepts seemingly beyond dispositifs of formal governance and outside the embedded exchanges of social life and intimate economies. These qualities seem to form the reason behind *Dark Mountain*'s self-description as “not political.” (Hine & Kingsnorth 2009/2014 23) Over the course of this chapter, the sort of cultural work they do is qualified as “bourgeois cultural work” or just “cultural,” which is conceptually distinguishable from a general “anthropological” culture that is defined as being suffused through life. Within this chapter, bourgeois cultural forms are discussed in terms of how they relate to the Enlightenment ideal of abstractly and particularly employing reason in a specific development of the world. Abstraction is understood as a transhistoric and transcultural capacity of the human, though with *Dark Mountain* it is identified as operating under a specific logic laid out for bourgeois art and the “non-political” within the Enlightenment tradition.

## **2. Dark Mountain's not political**

Co-authored and released by Dougald Hine and Paul Kingsnorth in 2009, *The Dark Mountain Manifesto* that launched the *Dark Mountain Journal* makes a claim of particular interest to this study's cultural policy of the multitudes. The claim regards the sort of literature that *Dark Mountain* Project aims to support. Their “uncivilized” writing is “not political writing, with which the world is already flooded, for politics is a human confection, complicit in ecocide and decaying from within.” (Hine & Kingsnorth 2009/2014 13) Dismissing politics as poison, they propose art as the appropriate response to climate change. Their claim to not be political is provocative, for it suggests that *Dark Mountain* operates in a notably different register from other writing projects dealing with the organization of humanity and nature. The inquiry of this chapter consists then of investigating the validity of *Dark Mountain*'s antipolitical claim, and of questioning their perspectival capacity to make such claims. For if, indeed, they had found a way to

operate differently between the concerns of humanity and nature, it would surely be interesting to consider their difference as a potential model for cultural policy in a time of climate change.

Therefore, this section (2) begins its investigation by observing how *Dark Mountain* conceives of politics and the arts. To grasp their editorial vision, what follows is a discussion of the project's founding, and a discussion of the political tendencies represented by Kingsnorth and Hine's editorial collaboration. Following this is a presentation of their conceptualization of the "uncivilized" writing promoted by their journal. "Uncivilized" writing intends to critique the effects of the Enlightenment; what follows then is an explication of what they see as attendant to the Enlightenment. *Dark Mountain's* critical use of terms like "civilization" and "the Enlightenment" ultimately sets up the rest of this chapter's inquiry, which first concerns the nature of the "cultural" and the "anthropological" and leads to an interrogation of other universal and general concepts contingent to the Enlightenment.

## **2a Dark Mountain's understanding of politics and art**

Frequent *Dark Mountain* contributor Chris Smaje penned what stands as the journal's timely response to the 2015 COP21 Paris Climate Summit meeting. His article "After Paris" describes the summit:

It resulted in a potentially legally-binding consensus agreement by the majority of the world's governments or their representatives, which included the commitment to hold the global average temperature to "well below" 2 degrees C above pre-industrial levels and to "pursue efforts" to limit it to 1.5 degrees... (Smaje 2015)

He laments that even a 1.5 degree increase has catastrophic ramifications, and that the agreement contains few details on how its paltry goals will be achieved. He worries that the agreement ignores until 2020 conversations about how countries will meet their self-defined goals. Finally, he is struck by the fact that the agreement makes no mention of the greatest contributor to anthropogenic climate change, fossil fuel. For Smaje, the ambiguity at the heart of the agreement is its cloaking of macro-economic issues with

micro-economic ones. Smaje sees it as government's failure to deal with the facts at the heart of climate change. Smaje's analysis, concurrent with the *Dark Mountain*, this study and that of other scholars<sup>123</sup> is that climate change is not a straightforward "set of 'problems'" that can be addressed by ancillary economic fixes. Climate change, for Smaje, is a complex. In lieu of further analysis, he turns to poet Audre Lorde's classic formulation, "For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us to temporarily beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change."<sup>124</sup>

Technocratic solutions, according to Smaje, are the master's tools. As master's tools, green energy and nuclear power at best "buy time for people to conjure less homicidal and biocidal ways of life before catastrophic climate change puts such niceties out of reach." He suggests that rather than a policy that tries to "decarbonize the supply of energy" through technocratic measure, it would be best to organize a counter-intuitive process that aims to "de-energize the supply of human wellbeing." This process develops a consciousness that replaces petroleum-dependent social capacities with means of achieving emotional fulfillment organized beyond a carbon economy. The de-energization he describes is aware of the affirmative capacities of governance but does not bow down to it – to quote Smaje: "No, your technocracy got us into this crisis, and even if we need some technocracy to help us out of it we'll be watching you vigilantly, and you will not placate us with your leave-it-to-the-experts rhetoric."

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123 See, for example, Beuret (2017), Leonardi (2017). Beuret critically describes how climate change has been constituted as a mathematical object whose form and scale suggests that national governments and international bodies are the only ones with the capacity to properly respond. He suggests a need for a "thick justice" response that "focuses on the constitution of material conditions themselves, on what forms of life infrastructure enables and disables, produces and inhibits." (7) Leonardi's research supports his claim that carbon trading's dogma is in the interest of capitalist marketization of risk, rather than aimed at directly addressing the social and ecological realities of climate change.

124 Originally from a speech, Lorde ([1984] 2007) discusses the space between dialectically opposed differences, identifying that which recognizes minor differences rather than polarities between positions as that which works with things other than the master's tools. "Within the interdependence of mutual (nondominant) differences lies that security which enables us to descend into the chaos of knowledge and return with true visions of our future, along with the concomitant power to effect those changes which can bring that future into being. Difference is that raw and powerful connection from which our personal power is forged." (74)

Smaje calls for the re-invigoration of locally scaled politics. He recognizes this as incongruous with his previous statement concerning the macro-economic responses; he allies more locally-scaled manners with “the politics of less ‘civilized’ peoples” who are characterized by “infinite decorum” and “a crafty impetus to get things done”. What needs to be done, according to Smaje, are those more local things that can be done by any means, in order to support the particularities of human existence.

Though Smaje’s thoughts regarding wellbeing are not unique to *Dark Mountain*, overall this study finds much to agree with in Smaje’s analysis.<sup>125</sup> It hardly seems worth parsing the differences here, because Smaje’s is but one contribution to a journal whose overall appearance he hardly affects. In fact, while Smaje identifies his thoughts as contiguous with *Dark Mountain*’s uncivilization politics, the *Dark Mountain* editors are explicit that they don’t forward politics, but rather uncivilization poetics. *Dark Mountain* Project organizes arts festivals and journals, not activist convergences. Since their 2009 founding and with their first issue in 2010, they’ve published *The Dark Mountain Journal* (now past its eleventh issue), otherwise titled “a journal of uncivilized art”. “Ecocide demands a response. That response is too important to be left to politicians, economists, conceptual thinkers, number crunchers; too all pervasive to be left to activists or campaigners. Artists are needed.” (Hine & Kingsnorth 2014 20)

So, while in this essay Smaje identifies a politic he finds inherent to uncivilization, *Dark Mountain* itself aims to be something rather more poetic. From their initial manifesto, they are interested in “uncivilized” writing that can “look over the edge, face the world that is coming with a steady eye, and rise to the challenge of ecocide with a challenge of its own: an artistic response to the crumbling of the empires of the mind.” (Hine & Kingsnorth 2009/2014 21) Uncivilization writing is one that seeks to autonomously “stand outside the human bubble” to write the human into a more balanced relation within the webs of nature. The writing claims to have autonomy from embedded human

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125 For an analysis of the affective nature of petroleum-based society and creative possibilities in this culture’s replacement, see Sonjasdotter (2016) Bloom (2015).



relationality while observing a human difference from nature. The chasm they see between the human and the rest of world has come about, in their analysis, by the egotism and violence of the human species and the Western Enlightenment project.

Uncivilization and their conceptualization of the Enlightenment are discussed later on in this chapter. Ahead of this, it is important to understand what the project is and who the project's founding editors are. Like the PAH, the spark that led *Dark Mountain's* to form came during the 2008 financial crisis. But unlike the PAH, rather than re-invigorating an activism at the chasm of social and economic collapse, *Dark Mountain's* goal was to write from among the emotional litter of the collapse's rubble. *Dark Mountain* co-founders Hine and Kingsnorth originally met in online activist discussions. After a chance pub meeting, they began penning what would become the *Dark Mountain Manifesto*.<sup>126</sup>

The text which became *Uncivilization: The Dark Mountain Manifesto* took shape over a period of six months, starting in the summer of 2008. From this distance, it already seems like the last summer of another age. Not an innocent age – no one would call it that – but an age in which certain delusions were easier to sustain. Then, wham! Lehman Brothers came down and for a few weeks we saw the naked fear of powerful men with no idea how much of their world will be left standing... As the mayhem of those weeks subsided, as the months that followed became years, we found ourselves in an age where crisis has become the normal. An age of widened extremes and darkening horizons, when outbreaks of hope spark sporadically like broken power lines across networks and onto the streets, but the future no longer holds the promise it used to. (Hine 2014 viii–ix)

Between them, Hine and Kingsnorth's backgrounds reveal diverse approaches to culture and politics. At the beginning of the project, Hine was working in London as an activist, BBC freelance journalist and also hoping on the success of a web start-up he was

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126 The manifesto's launch received print media coverage in the *Independent*, the *New Statesman* and elsewhere.

involved with. He was also involved with the experimental urbanist platform called *The Space Makers*.<sup>127</sup> And he participated with *The Space Hijackers*<sup>128</sup> activist art collective, which he described as a “collective of anarchists, psychogeographic pranksters and sworn enemies of Starbucks”<sup>129</sup>. (Hine 2007) The *Space Hijackers* follow the progressive alterglobalization movement’s demands for corporate responsibility, using activist tactics. Activism is defined by curator and theorist Peter Weibel as modeling political freedom upon artistic freedom. (Weibel 2015 60) Activist practitioners Andrew Boyd and Dave Oswald Mitchell (2012) describe activism as “rhizomatic movements marked by creativity, humor, networked intelligence, technological sophistication, a profoundly participatory ethic and the courage to risk it all for a livable future”<sup>130</sup>. (2) Reflecting on his heterogeneous scene of artists, activists, architects, designers, social entrepreneurs and policy makers, Hine writes:

Over time, I came to think of the connection between these groups in terms of “bringing new things into social reality”. This was how the world changed, not by

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127 From their website: “We create projects, publications and interventions to help make our cities, buildings and spaces work better. We specialize in reactivating dead spaces; harnessing unused potential in a community; and getting inside the machinery of regeneration, and using its levers to come up with something more interesting.” (<http://www.spacemakers.info/>)

128 From their website, “The Space Hijackers are a group of Anarchitects which was set up at the beginning of 1999. Our group is dedicated to battling the constant oppressive encroachment onto public spaces of institutions, corporations and urban planners. We oppose the way that public space is being eroded and replaced by corporate profit making space.” (<http://www.spacehijackers.org/>)

129 Naomi Klein’s *No Logo* (2000) describes anti-corporate protest of the 1990s and 2000s as being against the rapid expansion of transnational capitalism and its intended demolition of labor and environmental conditions via the seeming dematerialization of production via the prioritization of intellectual property. She describes Starbucks’ corporate policy (144–148) of entering regional markets by targeting local cafes and cannibalizing their customer base.

130 On his blog, Hine quotes a Space Hijackers’ press release for an action where they intended to critically intervene at the 2007 DSEI London Arms Fair which reflects the playful logic reflected in Boyd and Mitchell’s descriptions of activism:

On the last two occasions we have attempted to infiltrate the fair, embarrass the dealers and cause a ruckus. In 2003, we caught the trains to the fair with the arms dealers. Suited up and looking business-like we pulled prosthetic limbs (arms) from our cases and attempted to sell them to the dealers. In 2005, worried about their obsession with phallic objects such as rockets we attempted to sell sex toys to the dealers to make up for their lack of “weapons capabilities”. Generally however we are escorted out by the police. (Hine 2007)

the repetition of familiar arguments, but by the shifting of the boundaries of what people saw as possible. There was a craft to this, but it was a craft of observation, of working with what the world threw at you. It required the exercise of will, but in relationship with reality, not in stubborn opposition to it. (Hine 2010)

Paul Kingsnorth was a noted writer before *Dark Mountain*. His 2008 book *Real England: the Battle against the Bland* reached a wide audience and was quoted in speeches by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the then prime ministerial-candidate David Cameron. By his own telling, he'd evolved from being a direct-action activist in the UK's 1990s anti-roads movements to an NGO-styled campaigner and deputy-editor of *The Ecologist*.<sup>131</sup> He ambivalently recounts his path through eco-activism in the first issue of the *Dark Mountain Journal*:

Today's environmentalism is about people. It is a consolation prize for a gaggle of washed-up Trots and at the same time, with an amusing irony, it is an adjunct to hyper-capitalism; the catalytic converter on the silver SUV of the global economy. It is an engineering challenge; a problem-solving device for people to whom the sight of a wild Pennine hilltop on a clear winter day brings not feelings of transcendence but thoughts about the wasted potential for renewable energy. It is about saving civilization from the results of its own actions; a desperate attempt to prevent Gaia from hiccupping and wiping out our coffee shops and broadband connections. It is our last hope. (DM 1 59)

One might assume that while Hine thought to joyfully prank Starbucks for their corporate takeover of a lovable coffee culture, Kingsnorth would have seen such actions as distractions from the brutal anthropocentrism of humanity in general. Kingsnorth's tenure with *The Ecologist* reveals a stark difference to Hine's left orientation. Kingsnorth worked under the editorship of Conservative Party member Zac Goldsmith. Goldsmith's father James Goldsmith was the founder of the Eurosceptic 'Reform Party' that is understood by its style to be the immediate forerunner of the UKIP party that successfully

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<sup>131</sup> *The Ecologist* was a UK-based environmental journal published from 1970 until 2009. It continues with an online presence today.

pushed through the 2016<sup>132</sup> Brexit referendum that Kingsnorth voted for.<sup>133</sup> Zac Goldsmiths is also the nephew of controversial<sup>134</sup> *Ecologist* founder Edward ‘Teddy’ Goldsmith. Edward Goldsmith’s eco-philosophy has been critiqued for its cultural determinism,<sup>135</sup> patriarchal world-view, support of forced sterilization and its Malthusianism.<sup>136</sup> The Malthusian concept – that the ecology can only support a certain population size, determined by a particular social order nominated as capable of judging who is to be included in that population, has cast a dark shadow on ecological<sup>137</sup> thought

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132 For more on the connections between James Goldsmith, the Reform Party, UKIP and Brexit, see Goldsmith (2015), O’Grady (2016).

133 Kingsnorth’s (2017) *Guardian* essay, supporting his Brexit vote on the grounds that smaller borders count conceptually, allows for a more effective grasp of what is to be protected. His argumentation equates the threats neo-liberal globalization imposes upon the UK as a sovereign nation with those that have historically been placed, for example, upon Native Americans and other Indigenous peoples by systems in which they continue to be deprived of any meaningful voice. Rather than seeing complex machinations of dispossession, he sees globalization as a threat to a diversity of identities, which justifies his vote.

This essay has been roundly criticized by, among others, Out of the Woods (2017) and The Base (2017) for its antisocial nationalism and its wispy efforts to describe an environmentalism without global concerns. The essay is excluded from the main content of this study, due to its publication in the *Guardian* rather than in the pages of *Dark Mountain*.

134 In a section of Kingsnorth’s (2007) laudatory biographical article on Goldsmith, he does not obscure Goldsmith’s New Right ties. Yet, in order to suggest that Goldsmith was an equal-opportunity offender, he writes “He has been called ‘an extreme right-wing ideologue’ (by Dutch Stalinist Eric Krebbers, who disliked Teddy so much that he invented the word ‘fascistoid’ especially for him), a ‘Bolshevik’ (French magazine *l’Actuel*), a ‘wacko-communist-liberal’ (viewer of the US C-Span TV network) a ‘Jacobin terrorist’ (US writer Lyndon Larouche), an ‘enemy of the state’ (President Suharto of Indonesia), a ‘Gaian-sociobiologist’ (Wolfgang Sachs), a ‘madman’ (Professor Lewis Wolpert) and even, allegedly at any rate, ‘the anti-Christ’ (the Catholic Archbishop of Bologna).”

135 Journalist George Monbiot, writes of Goldsmith, “Goldsmith, as the former editors later pointed out in their paper ‘Blood and Culture’, assumes that culture is a rigid, immutable thing: that different communities can live only within the boxes nature has assigned to them.” (Monbiot 2002)

136 See Draper & Maré (2003), for a left-wing case against Goldsmith.

137 See Normandin & Valles (2015), for a discussion of how Malthusian thought, re-conceptualized through writing of 1960s ecologists Paul R. Ehrlich has fueled anti-immigration policy and split mainstream environmental groups.

since its German founding<sup>138</sup> and has played out in right wing<sup>139</sup> and fascist governance over the course of recent history.

Anti-fascist ecologists Biehl and Staudenmaier (1995) demonstrate the relation between concepts of population control and ecology:

...important tendencies in German “ecologism,” which has long roots in nineteenth-century nature mysticism, fed into the rise of Nazism in the twentieth century. During the Third Reich, Staudenmaier goes on to show, Nazi “ecologists” even made organic farming, vegetarianism, nature worship, and related themes into key elements not only in their ideology but in their governmental policies. Moreover, Nazi “ecological” ideology was used to justify the destruction of European Jewry. (3)

Peter Staudenmaier (1995) describes how the German philosophers and scientists who began the study of ecology were xenophobic anti-Enlightenment racists. He describes zoologist Ernst Haeckel, who coined the term ‘ecology’, as a proponent of social Darwinism, and how Haeckel’s hierarchizing of peoples greatly informed Nazi ideology.

Kingsnorth does not seem to be a fascist, though he did write (2007) an appreciative biographical article about Edward Goldsmith that fails to meaningfully criticize Goldsmith’s willingness to work with Europe’s ethno-nationalist Right. Kingsnorth justifies Goldsmiths’ politics with the political math that for the Left of Goldsmith’s day the primary organizational unit was workers, for Conservatives it was the state, and that for the Greens it was the planet. Kingsnorth explains that Goldsmith’s political thought depended on:

one, central idea that had not changed in Teddy's thinking for 50 years: that small-scale, "traditional societies" are the only ones that work, and that humanity needs to return to such a way of life if it is to have a future.

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138 See Biehl & Staudenmaier (1995).

139 Block and Sommer (2014) argue that from their origins, Malthusian views of the world’s limits have informed governmental arguments against social welfare policy.

Teddy's adherence to this notion has cost him friends and allies as the green movement has moved gradually away from it – and him – during his lifetime. A bit of historical context explains why. The early green movement had a wide variety of adherents and founders, from former communists to nationalists, and even a few notoriously far right sympathizers. The early greens aimed to be “beyond left and right”, to transcend not just contemporary political divisions, but industrial society itself. (2007)

Kingsnorth and Hine's backgrounds demonstrate multitudinous responses (be they agreeable or not) to the scaled organization that maintains current order. Despite their differences – Hine's left/urbanist anti-corporate activism and Kingsnorth's right-wing misanthropocism – they found ample room for collaboration. Hine describes their terrain as a shared one, built upon political disillusionment; “We were disillusioned with the state of environmentalism. It seemed that sustainability had come to mean sustaining the western way of living at all costs, regardless of whether this was possible or desirable”. (Hine 2014 x) Therefore, coming from a diverse activist milieu, Hine and Kingsnorth's “not political” project seems to be “not political” as based on its willingness to critique direct action and NGO activist approaches, in favor of a self-reflective consideration of concepts imminent to climate change.

## **2b On *Dark Mountain's* uncivilized writing**

Disillusioned by activism, *Dark Mountain's* editors constructed a cultural platform to articulate something they considered different: “We were disillusioned, too, with the state of literature and the cultural landscape.” (Hine 2014 x) Hine says they found current literature willfully ignorant of the ecological costs of Western cultural and economic achievement. Even for literature with this ecological awareness, their general political critique is brought to bear:

Even on occasions when writers did their best to face the entangled ecological, economic and social crises that surround us, the results tended to be unsatisfying: art deadening into a communication tool for messages from scientists and campaigners, soap-opera scale stories playing out against a backdrop of melting

icebergs and failing negotiations. The literary tools inherited from the recent past seemed ill-adapted to the times into which we were heading. (Hine 2014 xi)

Other writers, according to the manifesto, are ill-adapted because they emerge out of a political consciousness whose ends have been proven, by experience, to lead towards destruction. The legacies of these literatures' political relations prove that through them, humanity cannot properly steward the world – that neither a Christian God, political reason nor Marx's revolutionary insights have saved humanity thus far from its collective fate. Quoting poet Robinson Jeffers, from whose work their name *Dark Mountain* derives, Hine and Kingsnorth explain their interest in a writing that achieves the following:

The shifting of emphasis from man to notman: this is the aim of Uncivilized writing. To “unhumanise our views a little, and become confident / As the rock and ocean that we were made from...

They continue in their own words:

It is to accept the world for what it is and to make our home here, rather than dreaming of relocating to the stars, or existing in a Man-forged bubble and pretending to ourselves that there is nothing outside it to which we have any connection at all. (2009/2014)

These notions of uncivilization from their initial manifesto find definition through the project's more than eleven printed journals, countless blog and chat posts, and within its schedule of events. Their journal contains poetry, critical writing, expository essays, literary non-fiction, photography, painting, drawing and other artwork documentation gathered through open submission calls and editorial selection. Each issue's open call is thematic, and contributors include both lesser-known and better-known writers and thinkers.<sup>140</sup> In addition to organizing book launches, creative and poetry writing

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140 *Dark Mountain* has reprinted articles from well known authors including Naomi Klein, David Graeber, and Bill McKibben, among others.

workshops, they have also held at least three large “Uncivilization Festivals” – discussion and performance events. Frankly speaking, beyond the thesis’ interests, the issues’ creative and thoughtful writing makes for pleasant reading.

On its own terms, *Dark Mountain*’s explicitly literary project meditates upon the following understanding: “If we are indeed teetering on the edge of a massive change in how we live, in how human society itself is constructed, and in how we relate to the rest of the world, then we were led to this point by the stories we have told ourselves – above all, by the story of civilization”. (Hine & Kingsnorth 2014 17) Revealing and reworking civilizational narratives is the critical task, says *Dark Mountain*; their insight seems to be informed by the vision of a more humble and chastened human. To these ends, ripe with literary reference, their manifesto focuses on undermining particular myths:

As the financial wizards lose their powers of levitation, as the politicians and economists struggle to conjure new explanations, it starts to dawn on us that behind the curtain, at the heart of the Emerald City, sits not the benign and omnipotent invisible hand we had been promised, but something else entirely. Something responsible for what Marx, writing not so long before Conrad, cast as the “everlasting uncertainty and anguish” of the “bourgeois epoch”; a time in which “all that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned.” Draw back the curtain, follow the tireless motion of cogs and wheels back to its source, and you will find the engine driving our civilization: the myth of progress. (6–7)

Within Marx’s *Communist Manifesto* (Marx & Engels 1848/2007) excerpt that is referenced here, all that is solid that melts into air are the spiritualities, intensities, meaningful relations and values that are understood to have stabilized pre-capitalist society. Bourgeois capitalism renders these particular concerns meaningless, to be playfully reordered or swept away by relentless innovation in the rational quest for profit. Yet in the time of climate change, it is ever-greater climactic variability as much as capitalism that reveals social life to the unstable face of melting, though what *Dark Mountain* sees as melting is the objective myth of progress – that somehow things get



better:

Onto the root stock of Western Christianity, the Enlightenment at its most optimistic grafted a vision of an Earthly paradise, towards which human effort guided by calculative reason could take us. Following this guidance, each generation will live a better life than the life of those that went before it. History becomes an escalator, and the only way is up. On the top floor is human perfection. It is important that this should remain just out of reach in order to sustain the sensation of motion. (Hine and Kingsnorth 2014 7)

*Dark Mountain* collapses the concept of progress onto the goals of capitalism; even though there are other notions of progress besides increasing capacity for greater profit. *Dark Mountain*'s proposal for uncivilized writing comes in response to the failure of the whiggish<sup>141</sup> notion of progress suggested by the promise of the Enlightenment, which they directly link to capitalist development:

This then, is Uncivilized writing... We tried acting as God's steward, then we tried ushering in the human revolution, the age of reason and isolation. We failed in all of it, and our failure destroyed more than we were even aware of. The time for civilization is past. Uncivilization, which knows its flaws because it has participated in them; which sees unflinchingly and bites down hard as it records – this is the project we must embark on. (26)

### **2c *Dark Mountain*'s collapse and Enlightenment ends**

The concept of Uncivilization is an effect of the doom that *Dark Mountain* thinks even politicians and scientists recognize as humanity's fate. Uncivilized writing "bites down hard" on the record of civilization's failures rather than spitting them up. It emotionally owns these failures. Yet to *Dark Mountain*'s detractors who call them "collapsitarians"

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141 Whiggish history is one that suggests that history has an inevitable end-point. Discussing the results and meaning of 2016 Brexit and Trump elections, Kingsnorth (2016) discusses the whiggish ideal that history that has an ethic "[l]ike a dammed river bursting its banks, progress will inevitably resume its natural course, sooner or later."

gaming for civilization's collapse,<sup>142</sup> they respond:

... why would we bother? It doesn't need overthrowing: the historical force of gravity is already acting on it. When something is falling, the best move is often to get out of the way. We are facing the end of the world as we know it; but this is not the same thing as the end of the world full stop. The decline or stuttering collapse of a civilization, a way of life, is not the same thing as an apocalypse. It is simply a reality of history. (Kingsnorth & Hine 2010 3–4)

Despite Kingsnorth's affiliation with political reactionaries, the *Dark Mountain* Project's inversion of the Enlightenment shares only a basic similarity with, for example, the alt-right neo-Hobbesianism of Nick Land's (2012) *Dark Enlightenment* project. Though both find error in the effects of Enlightenment thought, Land finds total error in the manner in which the Enlightenment was politicized. *Dark Mountain* just seems to lament the Enlightenment's capacity to be an object of political organization in any direction. In Land's conceptualization, Hegel and the progenitors of the modern state are lampooned as "Cathedral", a moniker he utilizes to dismiss those who posit statist, liberal and moral notions of a common human being. "Cathedral" foolishly holds out common and idealistic horizons for many to share in and collectively produce. Land's racist accelerationism, theoretically fueled by an antisocial reading of Deleuze and Guattari, wants private capital to drive a limitless exploitation of biology and nature in gravity-free politics whose real costs are borne by everyone and everything but the rich. Land's weightless vitalistic imaginary envisions financial capital as the electric current capable of obliterating *whatever* ecological or social value in favor of wealthy men's pride. In sharp contrast, *Dark Mountain* only stands chastened in awe of the scale of logistical undoing by the forces of nature to come – appearing as the final wretched return of the Enlightenment. Where Land announces cruel apocalypse, *Dark Mountain* takes the position of humbled and tempered spectator.

Also meriting discussion here is the Left-accelerationist work of Nick Srnicek and Alex

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142 A 2014 article about *Dark Mountain* and Kingsnorth states, "He and his sympathizers were branded "doomers," "nihilists" and (Kingsnorth's favorite epithet) "crazy collapsitarians." (Smith 2014)

Williams (2013, 2015) as it might stand as a popular Left mirror image to the particular horrors of Land's *Dark Enlightenment*. While Land imagines hyper-capitalist innovation for the benefit of Randian heroes, Srnicek and Williams demand fully automated luxury communism organized by their paradoxical formulation of a "universalism from below". (Srnicek & Williams 2015 ch.4) A critical discussion of how Enlightenment's universalisms are conceptualized as providing narrational orientation from above to political thought and movements follows in subsequent sections of this chapter. Beyond their understandable call for economic justice, Srnicek and Williams paradoxically begin with a denigration of the "from below" from where the actual need for economic justice emerges in the experiences of the multitude. One notion on which this study agrees with Srnicek and Williams, contra *Dark Mountain*, is that modernity is not "simply a cultural expression of capitalism." (Srnicek & Williams 2015 ch.4) But Srnicek and William's disinterest in the ways of particular life, along with their blithe disregard for "folk politics," seems, at best, politically naïve – as others have stated,<sup>143</sup> Moreover, and as even *Dark Mountain* Issue 5 editorial suggests in reference to Left Accelerationism, unfettered luxury communism along the lines of current consumption habits writes a muddy ecological death sentence for the world. Muddy because, counter to *Dark Mountain*'s contentions, the realities consummated through truly progressive elements in the Enlightenment (cf. Wynter & McKittrick 2015) are not the material gifts of capitalism but extended capacities for thought that may or may not be realized.

Over time, *Dark Mountain*'s awareness of what is contingent to systemic collapse is developed by some writers into a more situated awareness of reality. Smaje's comments above provide one example of this, and another can be found in co-editor Hine's five-year reflection on the project:

This leaves us with a challenge that goes deeper than argument: to extricate ourselves from deeply ingrained habits of thought, and to do so with care, with an attention to how we treat one another, with a realism about our vulnerabilities and our ongoing dependence on systems with which we are often far from comfortable, with an imagination capable of finding infinity in an hourglass. The

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143 See for example Noys (2014), Wark (2015), Lowrie (2016).

*Dark Mountain* Project is not a political incubator, hatching the ‘down-wing’ of some new vertical alignment of politics (as if what the world needed were another binary opposition). Nor is it exactly what we thought it was, five years ago, when we wrote a manifesto for something like a literary movement. If only things were that simple. (Hine et. al. 2014 2–3)

*Dark Mountain* appreciates certain Chthulucenic bonds that make contemporary society socially capable. Yet at its core, for *Dark Mountain* the Enlightenment sits as reference to any abstract system, that by its abstract nature must be allowed to unwind as it is battered by the forces of nature beyond human control. *Dark Mountain* suggests that the weak binds of abstract social organization also serve as the path of this eventual undoing. Through their performed autonomy, *Dark Mountain* posits the possibility of a distanced observation of this undoing, from “outside the bubble.” Seated outside society, they do not imagine their own lives as falling apart. They are spectators rather than schizophrenics of collapse; witness for example, the perspective in the poem *Rearmament*, by 1930s American pacifist Robinson Jeffers, which serves as an epigraph to their manifesto:<sup>144</sup>

These grand and fatal movements toward death;  
    The grandeur of the mass  
Makes pity a fool, the tearing pity  
For the atoms of the mass, the persons, the victims,  
    Make it seem monstrous  
To admire the tragic beauty, they build.  
It is beautiful as a river flowing or a slowly gathering  
Glacier on a height mountain rock-face,  
Bound to plow down a forest, or as frost in November,  
The gold and flaming death-dance for leaves,  
Or a girl in the night of her spent maidenhood,

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144 Besides his poetry, Jeffers designed and built an architecturally significant stone house on the wind-swept Central California coast, and has been noted for founding a school of thought, inhumanism. Inhumanism’s central insight was man’s blindness to the world’s beauty because of his own self-consciousness (Coffin, date unknown).

Bleeding and kissing.  
I would burn my right hand in a slow fire  
To change the future... I should do foolishly.  
The beauty of modern  
Man is not in the person but in the  
Disastrous rhythm, the heavy and mobile masses,  
The dance of the  
Dream-led masses down the dark mountain.  
(Jeffers 1935)

As a heart-felt and humbled literary reserve, the non-political premise of their work might appear as an ethically resigned position from which the folly of the masses can be avoided. In the eyes of *Dark Mountain*, political incubators are complicit with the fool's errand of organized politics. There is more to say about how *Dark Mountain* conceptualizes the autonomy of the arts – as a weightless space outside of the “bubble of humanity.” They propose this bubble as distinct from politics and other organizational narratives they see as irrevocably tied to engines of destruction. But, in the following discussion that clarifies the *Dark Mountain* editors' understanding of humanity through an ongoing exchange with *the Guardian*'s George Monbiot, a less ideal picture of their concept of human relations emerges.

## **2d *Dark Mountain*'s anthropological imaginary**

To state the obvious, *Dark Mountain* is an institution whose editorial goals are forwarded in print with the aim of structuring meaning via the continuation of thought over time. Befitting the longevity of institutional time, the pressing of words onto the page saves them from melting into air. The seriality of *Dark Mountain*'s appearance demonstrates their belief that uncivilization isn't achieved by shouting to devotees from the mountaintops for all to decamp and head for other hills. To the contrary, *Dark Mountain* continues publishing. Poetry's roots in oral culture distinguish it from contemporary poetry not only by its lack of printed output, but also by the more general distinction between societies and their modes of organizing activity and thought. This organizational

difference can be witnessed in the results of the printing press' invention. Media theorist Marshall McLuhan (1964/1996) wrote that with the social organization necessary for printed books' publication and consumption comes "the first assembly line – mass production" (50) and the creation of mass publics. (68) Today's poetry distinguishes itself from the rest of social order by having its own unique spot and operations within the market economy, just like anything else. Under contemporary conditions, poetry can find a space for itself outside of all other organizations but the market. San Francisco Bay-based poet David Buuck's writing about poetry and Occupy Oakland demonstrates one political effect of such autonomy:

Certainly, being a "good" poet has nothing to do with one's activism, just as being an activist does not in itself make my poetry "better" or more interesting, or even more "political." Is an affinity group made up of poets necessarily any different than one made up of, say, carpenters, who would at least seem to have a more useful set of skills to bring to the table? Or as Oakland poet Lara Durback puts it, "I like poets in action more than poets at the action doing poetry." (Buuck 2014)

This sentiment runs only slightly counter to the narrational role art plays in Yates McKee's discussion of Occupy. Both describe art's capacity to be in distanced relation to activist movements rather than indistinguishable from life in struggle and its expression. In both Buuck and McKee's formulation, art is understood as consciously staged for a time and in appropriate places rather than as culturally enmeshed in place and time.

So, to the logic of *Dark Mountain's* poetics in a published exchange between *Guardian* columnist George Monbiot and Paul Kingsnorth, Monbiot writes, "I detect in your writings, and in the conversations we have had, an attraction towards – almost a yearning for – this apocalypse, a sense that you see it as a cleansing fire that will rid the world of a diseased society." (Monbiot & Kingsnorth 2009) To this, Kingsnorth responds, "You say that you detect in my writing a yearning for apocalypse. I detect in yours a paralyzing fear," and goes on to describe the space he'd like *Dark Mountain* to create as "a managed retreat to a saner world" with a poetry that will help get the world there. By the logic of autonomous art, Kingsnorth could rationally counter that Monbiot misidentifies *Dark*

*Mountain* as political actors rather than as the poets they aspire to be. The imagined autonomy that *Dark Mountain* maintains through the practice of contemporary poetry runs counter to the popular anthropological imaginary alluded to above with Marx – of a world where saga and myth are embedded within and throughout a society’s social fabric. This mythical way of being is also somehow the cultural approach that *Dark Mountain* hopes to nurture through its articles and attitude.<sup>145</sup>

Because of their romantic notions of a mythic human being, despite their embeddedness in a social form counter to it (made explicit with the serial printing of a journal), this study finds *Dark Mountain*’s artistic claims of difference based on its autonomy a little ironic. Autonomy is the functional logic of the contemporary culture industries, it is surely how most professional poetry, and much writing and art gets done today. Besides their performed imaginal autonomy stands their performance of the common claim to uniqueness.<sup>146</sup>

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145 This mythical way appears throughout the pages of the *Dark Mountain Journal*. For many of their writers, modern society is distinct from an equally general indigeneity characterized as an organic society suffused with meaning and connection to a spiritual world, to which modern society apparently needs to reconnect.

A conversation between Paul Kingsnorth and outdoor sporting goods magnates Doug and Kris Tompkins, who as philanthropists founded the Foundation for Deep Ecology, serves as an example. Doug Tompkins explains that his activism exceeds any pragmatism, that he is moved by a spiritual awareness that coincides with this above anthropological imaginary:

I don’t mean “religious” in the sense of organized religions; but it seems to me that one either believes in one’s deepest core that life is sacred – all of life, from other non-human species, to forests, oceans, mountains, the entire planet as a living massive organism that generally we know as “nature”, but we have a thousand names for it, from Mother Nature, Pachamama, Gaia; depending on the culture you are from. This is nothing new, of course – indigenous cultures created vast numbers of their narratives and myths around this most basic concept, and although the surface expressions of it varied, the core story is quite the same. So as children of industrial culture we are trying to reconstitute a new narrative, and it comes out in such forms as the current of eco-philosophy of the Norwegian philosopher and thinker Arne Naess, what’s known as “deep ecology”. It’s one way those of us coming from the techno-industrial culture can try to get a grip on the idea that we need to share the planet with other creatures. (Kingsnorth and Tompkins et. al. 2012 148)

146 Agamben (1994) is very clear about the necessity for originality within the contemporary arts.

### 3 Cultures

*Dark Mountain* seems to conceptualize their “not political” journal as a space for work to culturally be without actually being. To expand on this autonomy, it is useful to look further into the abstract discursive, cultural space that *Dark Mountain Project* identifies as the Enlightenment’s legacy. It should be understood that when used in the unqualified manner within this study, the term culture is understood to mean “proper to the ways in which humans relate by, in and to the world.”<sup>147</sup> There are a variety of definitions for the term culture, though this chapter will primarily be concerned with just two understandings: “bourgeois culture” and “anthropological culture”. The term “anthropology” is used in a more ambiguous manner – it is understood as both a general theory of the human and also the particular project of drawing out an understanding of the universally human, emerging out of the European Enlightenment.

The task of this section (3) is to provide a deeper understanding of the nature of this staged manner of human culture that *Dark Mountain* imagines as simply outside politics. First is a discussion of the function of culture in general. This is followed by an analysis of culture’s staging, by way of distinctions between fine arts’ bourgeois culture and what is grasped through the Enlightenment’s cultural anthropologies. Then comes a discussion of what, by conceptualizing the Enlightenment, the anthropological staging of the human as an intellectual project has achieved. Throughout this interrogation is an ongoing critical evaluation of *Dark Mountain*’s editorial logic.

To begin a discussion of culture in general, it is useful to look at what is common and exclusive to anthropological and fine arts’ culture. In *The Savage Mind* (1962), Claude Lévi-Strauss writes that cultural work can be understood as either a particular project of bricolage or as a massive project of engineering. Engineered culture creates social stability by changing meaning structures in spaces perceived as beyond society, while the bricoleur acts by piecing new relations within what already seems to be ordered by

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<sup>147</sup> This definition comes from the field of cultural anthropology. For example, Anthropologist Clifford Gertz explains culture this way: “...man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs...” (Gertz 1973 5)



society. (15) Both ways piece together cultural relations as formulas for how societies balance their need for change with their need for stability. The need for change comes from the need to adjust to all the things that vary in the world. The need for stability comes from the need for an ordered way to continue with life's collaborative processes. Lévi-Strauss's formulation clarifies how, within all societies, signs orient stable life through abstract (and thus variable) relation to myths, allowing for an abstract imagination of particular continuity despite change. Lévi-Strauss discusses the nature of abstract thought, a quality he ultimately associates with both bricolage and engineering. He demonstrates that abstraction is just a marker for something that any culture focuses on with "intensity and attention to detail." (2) The particularity of focus explains why one culture might have a developed vocabulary for minor botanical differences and another might have developed computational algorithms. Attention to details marks what any society focuses on to achieve stability: by bricolage making due within a seemingly closed universe; or by artistic, scholarly and scientific engineering that makes particular tools to expand the universe from a seemingly fixed vantage point.

Ultimately, rather than utilizing Lévi-Strauss's terminology, this study utilizes the general concept of "anthropological culture" and the specific formation of "bourgeois culture." The bricoleur and the engineer do not specifically map on to these terms. Yet, through Lévi-Strauss's framing, one can grasp how distinctions between the general ways of being and particular modes of doing are common properties of human activity. In an always-changing world, life has had to make peace with its own contingent being over time (through a multitude of manners Lévi-Strauss just happens to name bricolage) and its changing contingencies in time (as innovation engineered by art or science). The terms "anthropological culture" and "bourgeois culture" utilized here assist the managerial and policy interests of this study. "Anthropology" comes to terms with the general ways of people and populations. What are the cultures of the cultural industries, commonly referred to as "the arts" and here termed "bourgeois culture" (or just culture) generally works with abstract things meant to operate as relational bridges within the particular terrains of life and as the field of innovation and inquiry.<sup>148</sup> What follows in these next

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148 This role that Lévi-Strauss ascribes to the arts (1962 14) is congruent with the role described

two sections are further definitions and discussions of these terms. They matter because a cultural policy of the multitude must begin its anthropological relation to the multitude through the stable ways its life currently exists.

### **3a Anthropological culture**

Within the academic discipline of Cultural Anthropology, the difference between “our” culture’s arrangements and the arrangements of another culture is only qualitative – to the extent that “our” culture seems to be different, it is because “we” are the ones arranging it from within. The basic project of Western Anthropology as the study of the universal man is rooted at the concurrence of the Enlightenment and the European colonial project of rationally getting to know the world through the discursive and material commerce of warfare, coercion, research and trade. Anthropology rests upon an assumption of a necessary superiority of its authors over a population that evolves, at least theoretically, towards the author’s image. (cf. Fabian 2014) This anthropological imaginary rests on biological, material, theological and temporal suppositions regarding the nature of the universal human; that there is a singular core of what it is to be human throughout history. Critical theorists Sylvia Wynter and Denise Ferreira da Silva, and anthropologist Johannes Fabian identify in notions of this universal human a biological assumption that privileges DNA’s coding of male-species homo sapiens. This DNA-defined human comes with an existential need for food, shelter and self-reproduction – this logic of a species coded through DNA is the barest of life’s descriptions, it strips humans of their generally particular ways of being unique. The temporal assumption of human development progressing towards the Anthropologist’s perspective, contingent upon the definitional objectivity of the observer, coincides with an understanding of cultural or historical development as progressive – moving towards some ideal. This culture’s theological assumptions are grounded by a secular Christian trajectory, which assumes that mythical end-point and origin have little role in setting and determining fate. To that end, it is assumed by many social scientists that material history, rather than mythical intervention or narrational preconception, plays a primary role in the actual development of cultural expression and historical development. *Dark Mountain*’s critique of progress somehow

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by Deleuze and Guattari (1994).

addresses these general assumptions of modernity. Throughout this chapter, especially in relation to Hegelian thought, other critiques of modernity emerge.

What this universal imaginary allows for is a seemingly objective and sometimes politically progressive<sup>149</sup> understanding of the human as an individual, and for a continuity of elements available for arrangement across the historical scope of existence.<sup>150</sup> This cross-cultural, universally legible human appears in today's global media, through an exchange of images confirming the existence of other places to be seen and in some way considered. Cross-cultural contacts, the circulation of trade-goods and literature as well as legacies of colonialism may have contributed to a similar sensibility in the past. Anthropology seems based on the assumption that there is nothing absolutely foreign in human experience across time and geography, just new spaces and times for human experiences and relational arrangements to unfold in particular ways.<sup>151</sup> For a cultural policy of a truly global multitude in the time of climate change, it is necessary to provide an account of what is grasped and what is missed in this conception of the anthropological.

The academic discipline of Cultural Anthropology would be inconceivable without the above assumptions about universality. For example, note how anthropologist Franz Boas (1914) allows for the inference that all that is cultural is legible to any other culture,

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149 Anthropologist and post-colonial theorist Talal Asad (1973) allows that despite the anthropology and the Enlightenment project's complicity with horrific violence, part of it was motivated by sincere idealism and sense of shared humanity.

150 Anthropologist Margaret Mead asserts that aesthetic capacities are equally spread throughout culture and history, hinting at how cultural bias might blind others to the appreciation of any culture's art: "When only single arts were compared, primitive cultures had little to offer; but if one took these cultures whole – the religion, the mythology, the everyday ways of men and women – then the internal consistency and the intricacy was as aesthetically satisfying to the would-be explorer as was any single work of art." (Mead 1959 vi)

151 Historian of Science Justin E. H. Smith (2016) makes a similar point concerning the contents of philosophy: "While professional philosophers in the developed world today might not wish to acknowledge that when they speak of 'doing philosophy' they are speaking of a particular professional activity akin to practicing law or doing hospital rounds as a physician, it is unlikely that many of them would admit that philosophy is something that can be 'done' in Tibetan monasteries or the winter encampments of the Inuit." (8)

regardless of possible error. Witness, for example, his discussion of a folktale “picture” told by the Tsimshian people of the North American Pacific Northwest:

As might perhaps be expected, all the essential features of their life – the village, its houses, the sea and land hunt, social relations – appear distinctly mirrored in this picture. It is, however, an incomplete picture. It would seem that certain aspects of life do not appeal to the imagination of the story-tellers, and are therefore not specifically expressed, not even implied in the setting of the story.  
(397)

Boas assumes to know all the distinct features of life, and that what is not expressed by the Tsimshian storyteller is anyway somehow legible to the researcher, rather than occluded by absolute difference. By this logic, translation across cultural difference is always possible and has an equal chance for failure or success in any context – it is variability, rather than absolute difference, that drives any meaning’s abatement.<sup>152</sup>

For this study, one thing that matters about a general anthropology of the universally human is how it informs the logic of governmentality over any population. A generally human people, in the eyes of liberal and neo-liberal governance, have no needs specifically unique to themselves. By helping a population’s translatability and ability to self-re-invent, a general anthropology of the human helps ensure a degree of competent management over a territory. Foucault’s (2007) *Security, Territory, Population* demonstrates these implications. Within, Foucault explains the Paris-based government’s re-orientation of France’s economic policy from a mercantilist to free-market model during the eighteenth century. Physiocrats, whose political interests concerned agriculture’s relation to the state, introduced free-market governance in response to famine, and by doing so transformed a series of concepts held by state and subjects that

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<sup>152</sup> Boas (1914 397) expresses this equality of differences in this manner: “How accurately the cultural background of the life of the people is reflected by the form of its tales, appears in the diversity of form in which the life of various tribes of the North Pacific coast is mirrored in their traditional lore. Although the general form is much the same in all, the reconstructions based on the evidence of their tales exhibit sharp individualization, and emphasize the differences in social organization, in social customs, in the importance of the secret societies, and in the great diversity in the use of crests and other supernatural gifts.”

would ultimately strengthen governance's position in relation to its populations. Previously within France, cyclical famine was interpreted as a portent of evil or divine judgment upon human affairs. Government, to avoid judgments by divine logic, felt responsible to ensure the sustenance of its individual subjects. The Physiocrats' governmental innovation was to transform the fear associated with scarcity into something more mundane. (36) They did so by normalizing the concept that with a free-market that allowed goods to cross borders, an anti-scarcity system would naturally come to be. Local crop failure could be compensated by abundant crops elsewhere. This allowed the appearance of famine to be transformed into a natural event of fluctuating nature rather than a punishing blight. In this new framework, death by hunger could become understandable. It would become logical that a percentage of French people would die by hunger, for, as such logic goes, ending in death is just the course of nature.

By naturalizing the state as protector of free markets rather than of individuals' lives, actions like this seem to transfer state management from the state to the self-management of subjects and social groups now conceptualized as rational actors. Rather than through divinely or communally ordained activities, individuals now rationally innovate and self-manage their responsibilities for meeting and translating their needs and capacities into any number of need-fulfilling activities within the market. By this logic, those that fail to meet their own needs no longer serve as demonstrations of governmental or market failure – rather, they just serve to mark the limits of an apparently natural system whose accounting is the market and whose lives can either occur within, or exceed, the state's natural boundaries. Individual death serves only to signal the apparently nature-given limits of existence – made apparent through rational thought or understood as ecological carrying capacity. Individual death only translates to individual failure. All the while, and nevertheless, state management continues with the Hobbesian logic that it acts as guarantor of life through natural-seeming rules, in some engineered way.

Understood generally, cultures trace the sum total of ways in which people extend livability into and through particular situations over time. To the extent that anthropology attempts to describe how people have managed to govern themselves successfully over

time, it informs universal governance towards similar ends. Anthropologies help people govern themselves by defining what it is to be human against what it isn't. This does not suggest that universal governance or anthropological descriptions are flawless, they are not. Criticism of anthropological logics are multitude and thus valid; critiques represent multitudinous efforts to either carry or cast off particular logics of governance from the multitude's back. Theological critiques of secular anthropological imaginaries, issued within and beyond the 'five great religions' are common currency even within popular culture today – claiming, for example, particular divine human origins rather than earthly ones. Of equal weight are indigenous challenges to truths running against the values of secular anthropology's myths, in the favor of (for example) other myths, forms of science and origins for property relations.<sup>153</sup> *Dark Mountain* flirts with several of these spiritual and secular currencies with its own heterogeneous anthropology of the human's mythical being, in order to come to terms with the ends of the West, of civilization, of apocalypse or just the end of a particular way of life.

Elsewhere, efforts at either purely secular, or new myth anthropologies are equally multitudinous, dwarfing any sample pool that might contain, for example, Land's genetic will to power, the science-fictions of Drexciya and Ursula K. Le Guin, or François Laruelle's purely secular efforts to socialize the effects and phenomenology of philo-theological end-times. These critiques of temporal, biological and material assumptions of what the human is are also somehow attendant to theological concerns, some of which will be discussed in a following sections on the Enlightenment, Hegel and Marx. Nevertheless, Silvia Wynter's insistence that other secular ways of being human exist beyond the anthropological subject framed by Enlightenment parameters should be flagged here, along with very brief discussions of the exceptions Irigaray and Fanon also take to the universal human.

Luce Irigaray (1996) asserts the existence of absolute womanly difference from the

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153 There is much to reference here, but of particular interest are those that challenge the legal definitions of sovereignty and property in relation to settler-colonial narratives (Darian-Smith 2016) and those who have used indigenous spirituality to give earth a legal standing. (De la Cadena 2010)

anthropological male, and identifies the impossible capture of the female in theory. She states that women will always remain other to *whatever* male theory, project or plan. Fanon (2008) finds difference between the socially encrypted white man as Universal ideal and the embodied experience of those who can never be assured that they meet such standards. Silvia Wynter (2003) identifies language as socially pre-programmatic in favor of the Male and his ends; for existing as a capacity to determine overarching outcomes over time by embedding *whatever* behavior (such as the discursive practices of anthropology) in meaning networks oriented ultimately towards (for example) particular Western goals.

Wynter recognizes that racial concepts, built upon no meaningful biological difference, enforce social imaginaries that determine distinctions between master and slave. She sees concepts of race and the limits of social awareness as necessary for the common sense governing justifications of today's power relations. Language constitutes meaning over difference, legislating racialized relationships that carry across gender to maintain particular social projects (like global inequality) over time.<sup>154</sup> Universal definitions that bend towards EuroAmerican power frame awarenesses determine in what guise, and for who, cultural praxis is objectively bent. For Wynter, there is no *Universal human*, there are just many linguistic and social compacts that share similar words but work towards different ends. Some compacts set up long-lasting determinations that assign, for example, "rational" behavior to European performers, despite multitudinous examples of European irrationality.

In addition to the biological parameter for life, Wynter identifies sociality and language as having an equally powerful, differential coding that determines human experience beyond bare life's DNA. She sees the "naturalness" of bare biological life as European Christian secularity's replacement for and generalization of its own mythical determinations of origin and fate. The above example of French grain policy provides a

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<sup>154</sup> In her read of Irigaray, Philosopher Danielle Poe (2011) makes a strong case that Irigaray's biological grounding for gender does not exclude transsexuality from its desired gendered class, asserting that gender is a social, relational-class of difference rather than one biologically determined.

clear example of how linguistic play transforms theology from one bound by heavenly judgment to one where fate is “naturally” settled by the nature of the market and weather. Such play creates new ways of being human, where culturally determined outcomes become “law-likely” through their own organizationality. It becomes law-likely that a certain population will face hunger and government will not be to blame. For Wynter, overall social determinations are as necessary to life as biological ones. Linguistic codes of power flow through *whatever* cultural objects to maintain social interests unless sociality is totally rewritten in other ways.

### **3b Bourgeois culture**

Against *Dark Mountain*'s editorial approach of “uncivilization”, Wynter presents a steep challenge. The challenge has little to do with the abstract thoughts and forms that make *Dark Mountain*'s work legible and worth reading. Rather, anthropologically speaking, it has to do with who *Dark Mountain* defines as human. Their anthropological imaginary is firmly set within a bourgeois market-earth that can hardly bear to give any more to the multitude. Kingsnorth's pro-Brexit vote is a clear manifestation of this imaginary taking form of as an editorial tendency. *Dark Mountain* proposes a poetry that will build a movement to manage the retreat of Western Civilization in the interests of Western subjects. Their immediate forms for culture, that prioritize speculative tools for cultural management, are the subjects of this section.

The *Guardian* debate between George Monbiot and Paul Kingsnorth further demonstrates how the climate apocalypse *Dark Mountain* hopes to manage works through the social limits that bourgeois culture allows, and how the collapse they imagine maintains the political agency of those that benefit from the ongoing political status quo. In response to Kingsnorth's claims that the world of contemporary capitalism is uniquely destructive and therefore should be allowed to collapse, Monbiot recognizes the threats of capitalism but suggests that the capacity for environmental destruction is a human-historical capacity, and is not a unique capacity of humanity in capitalism.<sup>155</sup> Monbiot suggests that

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155 To Kingsnorth, Monbiot writes, “You maintain that modern industrial civilization ‘is a weapon of planetary mass destruction’. Anyone apprised of the Paleolithic massacre of the



rather than writing stories that narrate civilizational collapse, work could be done to forestall and soften such a collapse's effects. He writes that the "immediate consequences of collapse would be hideous: the breakdown of the systems that keep most of us alive; mass starvation; war. These alone surely give us sufficient reason to fight on, however faint our chances appear." The societies that survive collapse, he suggests, will not be happy Tolkien shires, their ensuing order "is likely to be imposed through violence. Political accountability will be a distant memory." (Monbiot & Kingsnorth 2009)

Over the course of three years of exchanges between Monbiot and Kingsnorth in print, Monbiot comes to understand poetry's role in confronting climate change, especially in relation to the question of how "the green movement has torpedoed itself with numbers." Monbiot (2011) references Kingsnorth's suggestion that activists "might perhaps start by observing that worlds are not 'saved' by the same stories that are killing them." Yet in the same article, he judges that *Dark Mountain* has not produced any "convincing account of how people could be persuaded to turn their backs on manufactured products, advanced infrastructure and public services." This contention, that *Dark Mountain* has not managed to come up with devices to change human behavior, makes clear that what both Kingsnorth and Monbiot are debating are the management techniques of politics by poetry and culture. By the fact of access to the national stage of *The Guardian*, both Monbiot<sup>156</sup> and Kingsnorth are members of a political class whose mediated concepts play out beyond the printed pages of their work. There is an expectation that such writers' words have import – the fact that their poetry, prose and politics are judged by how they manage to move people belies the fact that poetry and art have governmental functions: to build and lay out convincing arguments.

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African and Eurasian mega fauna, or the extermination of the great beasts of the Americas, or the massive carbon pulse produced by deforestation in the Neolithic must be able to see that the weapon of planetary mass destruction is not the current culture, but humankind." (Monbiot & Kingsnorth 2009)

156 As a journalist, Monbiot demonstrates an appreciation for the responsibility that comes with his platform – in a recent (2016) article he blames the failures of climate's governance not on corporations or governments, but on journalists that stand silent witness to climate change's reality beside the deadly union of corporations and governments.

What Monbiot is pointing towards, and what this study finds unconscionable in Kingsnorth's work is the Malthusianism inherent in his editorial interests. The first article (2009) of the Monbiot-Kingsnorth exchange is titled, "Is there any point in fighting to stave off industrial apocalypse?" and is clearly framed by the subtitle, "The collapse of civilization will bring us a saner world, says Paul Kingsnorth. No, counters George Monbiot – we can't let billions perish." Throughout their exchanges, Kingsnorth consistently presents his diagnosis of capitalism as destructive in nature. He suggests that capitalism be contained by its self-inflicted and inevitable collapse. He describes most human-interested culture as inherently at odds with nature. In his 'Confessions of a Recovering Environmentalist' printed in *Dark Mountain Journal* issue 1, Kingsnorth (2010) writes:

Now it seemed that environmentalism was not about wildness or ecocentrism or the other-than-human world and our relationship to it. Instead it was about (human) social justice and (human) equality and (human) progress and ensuring that all these things could be realized without degrading the (human) resource base which we used to call nature back when we were being naïve and problematic. Suddenly, never-ending economic growth was a good thing after all: the poor needed it to get rich, which was their right. To square the circle, for those who still realized there was a circle, we were told that "(human) social justice and environmental justice go hand in hand" – a suggestion of such bizarre inaccuracy that it could surely only be wishful thinking. (Kingsnorth 2010)

The managed collapse Kingsnorth oversees through his writing and editorial work may turn a blind eye to the link between environmental and social justice because his definition of justice<sup>157</sup> seems determined by capitalist definitions.<sup>158</sup> He recognizes no

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157 Wynter (2015) observes that post-colonial national determination after World War II followed the path highlighted by global economic governance rather than being a blossoming of different political determinations. This matter, for her, explicitly demonstrates the programmatic effects of language, and that the concepts by which post-colonial leaders were educated within colonialism predetermined this outcome.

158 Autonomist Marxists *Tiqqun*'s (2012) reformulation of dispossession and poverty – "the opposite of poverty is not wealth but misery..." is one counter-narrative to the concept that in the appropriate counter to deprivation is inordinate wealth. *Tiqqun* continues, "Poverty designates

other just imperatives of the multitude besides motivations for cash-money. In his eyes, the people simply want to profit. Suffice to say here (as this is the topic of the next chapter) this study asserts that the relationship between just human organization and earthly resources are far more flexible than Kingsnorth allows. Thus, it is important to consider the Malthusian ethic that can conceptualize an environmental carrying capacity as justification for ruling class disinterest in the wellbeing of those whose ends they nevertheless help determine – namely the poor and dispossessed of the world. This logic of an expendable population is amplified by governance through its rational market logic. As political sociologists Fred Block and Margaret R. Somer (2014) suggest, Malthus’ social naturalism “ignores the variety of social mechanisms that societies have used to manage population growth and to augment the supply of food.” (39)

This, especially in light of Kingsnorth’s support of Brexit, seems worthy of further consideration. In framing his position, he explained that those within the UK who voted to remain within the EU see border walls as racist, while “[to] a nationalist, they are evidence of a community asserting its values and choosing to whom to grant citizenship.” (Kingsnorth 2017) Looking at Kingsnorth’s Brexit support based on environmental grounds reveals that how he flatly ignores any consideration for the terrestrial needs of climate refugees of any species. Kingsnorth’s management ethos essentially says that nothing is to be done for those others because the system of progress is broken. In this way, he disregards the unequal effects upon the global populations that climate change’s effects are projected to have.<sup>159</sup> While other *Dark Mountain* articles hint at other politics (cf. Smaje 2016), editor Kingsnorth’s thanocratic logic simply ignores the human capacity to rearrange particular global relationships to suit different ends in time. Things could be different, but Kingsnorth is not interested.

Having identified a central attribute of *Dark Mountain*’s “uncivilization” – its disinterest

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someone who can use everything, having nothing of his own, and misery the state of someone who cannot use anything, either because he has too much, or he lacks the time, or he is without a community.” (88)

159 See Nicholls (2007), and Brown (2007).

in being an affirmative poetic agent in the general management of social rearrangements – it is useful now to witness the perspectival shift from the generally anthropological to the specifically cultural. Anthropology’s task is to demonstrate things essential to a general human based upon pre-existing narratives of what the human is. With the “bourgeois culture” of *Dark Mountain*, culture utilizes objects within to determine the culture’s own development in time.

The use of the term “bourgeois culture” is informed by critical theorist Peter Bürger (1984). In Bürger’s work, the term functions to distinguish between bourgeois uses of art, and art made within previous European epochs – Sacral Art in the Middle Ages, Courtly Art of the Renaissance, and Bourgeois Art in the industrial period up until today. Bürger traces the transition of European social relations in toto from an anthropological culture “organically” unified under ecclesiastic rule, to one fractured and then structurally ordered by bourgeois relations. Bürger follows the materialist teleology of Marx. This bourgeois cultural restructuring occurs over fissures the bourgeoisie drove through the “all that is solid” commons of life, that melted “into the air” the common practices that he names “collective craft”. (48) In this way, the collective practice of life moves into domains now navigated by individuals. Under this bourgeois conception of being, cultural production, like all other forms, exists as an independent sphere “autonomous” to all others. Here, the artistic sphere is imagined as distinctly comprised of professionals: of artists and other cultural workers who are tasked with proposing values and techniques that float independently from particular needs and interests. These values and techniques are seen as apparently disinterested with anything other than a naturally existing and ill-defined general public.

This paradigmatic shift from the sacral to the modern demonstrates dramatic cosmological and anthropological reorientations. These orientational shifts expose new ways of being human that Wynter alludes to. Marxist Feminist scholar Silvia Federici (2009) observes how these transformations are concurrent with in-time scholarly reorientations of classical Judeo-Christian narratives that forward the notional perfectibility of individual humans through reason. Federici describes good and evil

rewritten in the “age of reason” not as the play of supernatural forces beyond human reach, but as playing out in each and every body as a battle between the rational and the wild. Attendant to these paradigmatic shifts, says Federici, are the earthly aims of church, state and capital to “transform the individual’s power into labor-power” for the interests of capital. (133) (cf. Wynter & McKittrick 2015) Federici echoes Hobbes in her description of rationality’s really imaginal play within the social body as “a conglomerate of mechanical motions that, lacking autonomous power, operates on a basis of external causation, in a play of attraction and aversion where everything is regulated.”(139)

More than a century after Hobbes, one of Enlightenment’s greatest proponents, Immanuel Kant, finds little need for the sovereign to play so active a role in organizing life when individualized rational thought can become a primary governing concern. In *An Answer to the question; What is Enlightenment*, Kant (1784/2009) declares, “Laziness and cowardice are the reasons why such a large portion of men, even when nature has long emancipated them from alien guidance, nevertheless gladly remain immature for life.” His prescription is clear: “Enlightenment is man’s emergence from his self-incurred immaturity.” (1) Kant suggests that public reason stands for the good sense and ethic of letting the human capacity for informed thought, not habit, guide decision-making; that individual reason is of public benefit. Kant, appealing to his sovereign, the Enlightenment patron Frederic the Great of Prussia, conceptualizes a state not ordered through Hobbes’s singular sovereign but rather one made up of publics with competing behaviors, interests and habits that must be rationally mediated. A state ordered by generalized reason, rather than force would exist to its own profit.

One thing the Enlightenment suggests, in specific relation to the arts, sciences and humanities, is that society entertain as rational the forward-thinking position of individual thought speculatively employed to produce concepts and objects whose impacts are not yet accounted for, but may become meaningful. Bourgeois cultural forms are produced as objects intended as possible material and immaterial guides and guideposts for personal and collective behavior, to manage rational thought or to guide material activity. Through Marx’s (1992) notion of the *general intellect*, abstraction’s weightless and speculative

productions have a greater potential for value than objects and concepts produced strictly as the habitual reproduction of life. Therefore, though different, the line between the academically defined cultures as anthropologies and those produced by bourgeois institutions dedicated to art and entertainment are not absolutely different. General anthropologies of life in contemporary society continue to be “written” in actual living practice while the cultural work of formally “cultural” institutions purposefully aim to push actually lived experience in particular, performative, directions. The blossoming of cultural forms that speculate on multitudinous possibility allows the state and economy to manage or co-develop lines of particular interest besides the ongoing developments of multitudinous thought.

Though Gregory Sholette’s (2011) *Dark Matter* is specifically oriented within the realm of the fine art, it is not a difficult leap from the subject of his work to the broader recognition that the actual compositional labor and contingent infrastructures of the wider contemporary (bourgeois) cultural realm is wider and deeper than its headlining stars. Those who headline reflect the juncture between what can be commonly appreciated and what has been nominated by finance; but also, as Sholette suggests, what also sometimes appears are the residues and hints of meaningful resistance movements. Audiences are attracted to things of public concern. The *dark matter* of contemporary culture, that individual association as consumers is bound to formal cultural production in a significant economy – creates a powerful political and social economy that blends the anthropologies of life with what bourgeois culture represents and presents in the representational. The dispositifs of cultural industries can make cultural forms more law-like – where the hippy living next door to the office manager really is a hippy. This sphere where the image of the living masks over the actual ways of being is classically formulated as Guy Debord’s spectacle.<sup>160</sup>

In not wanting to be political while waiting for collapse, *Dark Mountain* hopes to be seen as part of the dark matter of anthropological life. In this way, they can be seen as simply

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160 Here referring to Debord (1967/2012).

being; outside their actual reliance upon bourgeois political stasis.<sup>161</sup> Left and right, many of *Dark Mountain*'s authors can work with that which accompanies climate change as long as their own material conditions are only taxed by what appears to occur naturally, but not by what can be organized socially. To some editors and contributors, as long as the fact of their writing makes it appear otherwise, their rationality allows for a Malthusian cull on the grounds that the deaths of others seem natural. Writers and artists within this dark matter do not want to appear to be managing life in the Cthulucene as such explicit management would call for either a social re-organization that would lead to their loss of property – or for the other's social death. Though reason might suggest that life can be reorganized differently, within the terms of bourgeois life, common sense often suggests that individual property trumps society.

To the extent that *Dark Mountain* preserves the wealthy West's cultural capital by appearing to care while not doing it, it is not a praxis of the living, but rather the management of a political economy laid on top of biology and leading towards biology's ends, as well as towards its own ends through the continued monetization of bare life. Alberto Toscano's (2008) *Open Secret of Real Abstraction* seems instructive and provides a way to think through the circulation of *Dark Mountain*'s thanatotic abstractions. The cynicism of this *Dark Mountain*'s Malthusian narrative openly circulates in the free market of capitalist ethics<sup>162</sup> beside the project's own enthusiastic critiques of capital. To the extent that its concept of uncivilization circulates as a management technique for collapse through political stasis, their work is open to serious critique. Nevertheless, *Dark Mountain*'s content is heterogeneous, and this study is hesitant to condemn the whole

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161 Though Noys (2014) describes how today's political logjam as afforded by the domination of financialized relations, he identifies fantasies of environmental collapse as reactionary, for in them, only the "right" people survive, or everyone dies to no one's particular advantage: "This rupture of the capitalist continuum results in an apocalyptic imagination that produces dreams or nightmares of a world 'cleansed' of humanity, from 2012 to the History Channel's *Life After People*. These fundamentally reactionary fantasies can only imagine redemption of our fallen world on the condition that humanity ceases to exist, or is reduced to the 'right' number of the 'saved'." (52)

162 According to Toscano (2008), the open secret of any abstraction with capitalism is that the abstract form, however critical or meaningful it appears, is potentially captured in meaning and effect by the capitalist system that circulates it.

project even if there are some highly unsavory editorial lines. Writers and readers come to *Dark Mountain* with activist hopes and wounds expecting some political succor, and find within it some meaningful writing.

In relation to the idealism capacitated by abstraction that helps it exceed *whatever* system that produces it, the following section traces the question of possibility in abstracted objects. If a cultural policy intends to connect through cultural things to the global multitude, it must consider the nature of the abstracted things that are circulated to carry out policy. This continues the conversation of *whatever* from the previous chapter, but begins with a conceptualization of universality through German Idealism.<sup>163</sup> The initial object is Hegel's notion of the universal concept. Universality is the appearance of a thing's general translatability based on its identification as a singular concept that seems to connect across difference. These questions of universal thought related to Hegel matter to this study for at least two reasons. First, Hegel's concepts narrate one logic for how culture is imagined to develop general humanity over time towards particularly universal ends in a manner through law-like functions. Second, much political thought attentive to the multitude critiques Hegel's work.

#### **4 Universal thought**

Ringed with Eurocentric and theological undertones, Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807/1977) is an influential text concerning the nature of universal concepts. Hegel suggests that with exposure to *bourgeois* culture's laws, objects and procedures, all men are set on a path to self-consciously appreciate the *universal Spirit* of humanity. For Hegel, when all people<sup>164</sup> embark on his processual journey towards self-consciousness, the Enlightenment is made flesh. (296) This enlightenment pathway is guided by cultural activities and objects that most align with the Enlightenment. These things constitute

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163 "There is more chance of an entire public enlightening itself. This is indeed inevitable, if only the public concerned is left in freedom." (Kant 2009 2)

164 For Hegel, all men are equal, though not in the political sense. Equality for him was a philosophical concept rather than a legal one, as men and women and different classes of people are afforded different legal statuses within his system. See for example *Ethical Action, Guilt and Destiny* in Hegel. (1977 267–278)



Hegel's particular class of *bourgeois* culture, which can be distinguished from general culture. General culture is organized by *divine law*, which like Hobbes's *state of nature* and Aristotle's *zoe*, organizes familial relations, but does not organize meaningful relations between men. For the most part, Hegel takes for granted the arrangement of home relations. His interest appears not to be the organization of life, but the organization of something he finds superior to it.<sup>165</sup>

*Divine law* organizes familial relations and what today might be called *social reproduction*.<sup>166</sup> Against the stable relations of divine law, Hegel proposes that the individual is oriented by *human laws* that reveal positive social approaches toward an appreciation of the *universal Spirit*. Though Hegel does not use the term, to recognize his cultural objects and manners as *bourgeois* marks how he values alienation, abstraction and judgment that are also necessary for bourgeois marketization. With bourgeois culture, Hegel finds that the individual "moulds itself by culture into what it intrinsically is, and only by so doing is it an intrinsic being that has an actual existence; the measure of its culture is the measure of its actuality and power." (298) The individual's alienation coincides with this world-alienating process of measuring, abstracting, marketing and valuing resources and people beyond their own place of activity. Hegel's anthropological measure of people is two-fold; all people are apparently equal, though the European male is better.

Dialectically, anything's appearance reveals what it is *and* what it isn't. Self-conscious negation in thought is central to Hegel's process of dialectical cultural development. In *Phenomenology's* "Religion" chapter (410–478), Hegel rests the dialectical process upon an anthropology of human cultures that clarifies his bourgeois ideal.<sup>167</sup> In his ideal

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165 "It is the simple genus, which in the movement of life itself does not exist in this simplicity for itself; but in this result points life towards what is other than itself, namely, towards Consciousness for which life exists as this unity or as genus." (Hegel 1977 63)

166 See Hegel (1977 466–478).

167 *Phenomenology of Spirit* was written as Napoleon's army, which Hegel supported, had pushed into Germany; writing about revolutionary capacity for change implicit to his own dialectics, Hegel (1977) says, "This revolution gives birth to absolute freedom, and with this

society, individuals demonstrate an appreciation of *universal Spirit* by maintaining social unity despite the varieties of difference within their state. Next to, but not quite equal to this ideal sits Islamic culture whose spirit is formalized in central religious icons like the Kaaba at Mecca. For the philosopher, Islamic culture's need to formalize collective consciousness individually disallows the self-awareness necessary for a true appreciation of *worldly Spirit*. (423) On the other extreme of the Western ideal, Hegel places pantheistic societies that he characterizes as chaotic, suffering from low self-awareness and devoid of self-governing reason.<sup>168</sup> Hegel's ideal society maintains social peace across this unequal plane of relations through real and abstract laws written in legal documents but also with reflection on fine arts, architecture, religious iconography as well as in pure philosophical abstraction. In such an ideal society, Hegel suggests that the formal unity of Christian iconography allows for diverse readings that do not concretely congeal society into one concrete and immovable sociality.<sup>169</sup>

For Hegel, abstraction is a process of “the rooting-out of all immediate being” in order to expose “pure being”. (113) This abstraction is the production of *Universal essences*, dialectically purified through a process:

[Stripping] off the traces of root, branches, and leaves still adhering to the forms and purifies the latter into shapes in which the crystal's straight lines and flat surfaces are raised into incommensurable ratios, so that of Understanding and, at the same time, its essential nature – incommensurability – is preserved for the

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freedom the previously alienated Spirit has completely returned into itself, has abandoned this religion of culture and passes on to another region, the region of moral conscious. (296)

168 Hegel (1977) describes the spirit of pantheistic societies as a “host of separate antagonistic national Spirits who hate and fight each other to the death and become conscious of specific forms of animals as their essence; for they are nothing else than animal spirits, animal lives which separate themselves off from one another and are unconscious of their universality.” (420)

169 Hegel suggests that the particular historical measure of a society's Enlightenment can be observed by the extent to which the individual, using reason within existing relations of civil society, exerts his latent power in work over time while maintaining order. “[T]he other side of its (Spirit's) becoming, History, is a conscious self-mediating process – Spirit emptied out into Time...” (Hegel 1977 492) Put another way, the working of a complex, but unified society is the dialectical process completing itself as “spirit completing itself in itself”. (488)

Understanding.<sup>170</sup> (427)

Hegel orients *Understanding* against faith. Understanding is more than simple acceptance of universal Spirit. Understanding is the use of reason to actively reflect upon the goodness of the existing world toward conscious appreciation of worldly Spirit. Through reason, rather than faith or some revolutionarily different order, the Enlightenment project realizes the existing universal Spirit of the world's actual here and now. In this way, "In its hostility to faith, as the alien realm to essence lying in the beyond, it is the Enlightenment." (296)

By individual acts of reason, Hegel's universal bourgeois Spirit traces an ecology of a world that necessarily relates through difference; though it is an ecology without materiality, tracing only conceptual relations.<sup>171</sup> Hegel devalues the innumerable material and social relations that compose the worldly social ecology as it is, in order to find the world, as it is, in perfection.

#### **4a Hegel's Ends, managed stability and death**

In a curious inversion of Hobbes's fear of violence, Hegel recognizes war's (negative) enlightening ethic to shake up relations that have stayed fixed by habit.<sup>172</sup> He recognizes

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170 According to Hegel (1977) essential nature has little to do with an object's appearance, for objects are just inorganic (universal) essences in organic references. Objects are how singularities appear in "environment and habitation". (427)

171 This *Spirit* is not aimed at actual revolution. Rather, the awareness of *Spirit* in the world is more like the awareness that the world functions like clockwork and self-awareness is the attending to the cleanliness of the gears that compose clockworks:

It is for them neither the divine, essential Light in which unity the being-for-self of self-consciousness is contained only negatively, only transitorily, and in which it beholds the lord and master of its actual world; nor is it the restless destruction of hostile peoples, nor their subjection to a caste-system which gives the semblance of organization of a completed whole, but in which the universal freedom of the individuals is lacking. On the contrary, this Spirit is the free nation in which hallowed custom constitutes the substance of all, whose actuality and existence each and everyone knows to be his own will and deed. (Hegel 1977 425)

172 By actions of war the individual "raises conscious self into freedom and its own power." (273)

that pain sits on the philosophical shelf as a useful metaphor for what drives philosophical development. In Hegel's ecology, the actual world's innumerable parts sit inconsequentially in place while a virtual, theological, scientific, and aesthetic monotheism clarifies truthful higher orders to facilitate the meaning of individual activity.<sup>173</sup> This meaning is guided by awareness of one's developing relation to concepts that are in essence true, and beyond what one can conceive without them. Truths are proven true because of how they conceptually connect the particular to a larger order of things. This order of things, this *world Spirit*, is the "power of the whole," (272) and is conceived as the sum result of all relations which must be as they are for things to in be as they are, as perfect divine order revealed through human activity. To the extent that this narrative for truth has played out through historical events, its conceptual weaknesses are multitude.

For political philosopher Achille Mbembe (2003), Hegel's *Spirit* works the bulk of the world's individuals towards social or actual death via its politics. By its politics, abstract truths dialectically feed human and other relations and materialities through a negational engine of Western bourgeois interests that only recognize anything's ultimate measure, its abstract essence, in death. Note above the poetic brutality that Hegel enacts upon nature to strip it to its bare essence – Mbembe finds this conceptual brutality enacted within the bourgeois production of life<sup>174</sup> – with violence becoming the state of nature with culture being only a recognition of life's accounting. "Within the Hegelian paradigm, human death is essentially voluntary." (14) In his reading of Hegel, Mbembe sees the facts of anyone's life accounted to justify the final fact of their apparently natural death. For example, the deadly capsizing of a refugee's boat appears as meaning and judgment of their poverty, lawlessness and incapacity to fulfill their own needs. Death's voluntary

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173 "Spirit is, in its simple truth, consciousness and forces its moments apart. Action divides it into substance, and consciousness of the substance; and divides the substance as well as consciousness." (266)

174 "First, the human negates nature (a negation exteriorized in the human's effort to reduce nature to his or her own needs); and second, he or she transforms the negated element through work and struggle. In transforming nature, the human being creates a world; but in the process, he or she also is exposed to his or her own negativity." (Mbembe 2003 14)

nature also demonstrates a bourgeois definition for freedom, exemplified here in the refugee's risk of death so to be differently accounted.

The impetus for *Dark Mountain's* Issue two editorial, *Control and Other Illusions* (Kingsnorth & Hine 2011 1–3), is the irony they see nestled between the clarity of thought and the muddy reality of life. Their editorial contrasts clearly articulated anti-capitalist and ecological critique with an unclarity of what might actually constitute meaningful activity in the time of climate change. “We can see humanity's utter degradation of the rest of nature, but we don't know how to stop doing it – or, rather, we know exactly how to stop doing it but we are not prepared to even contemplate making the changes necessary, because they would break our stories open and leave them exposed to the wind.” (2) *Dark Mountain* sees political projects as simply unachievable because of myths that hold social formations in check against other ways of being. In relation to the burden of this current sixth great extinction, some of their writers ponder how those in the West can deal with their guilt by association through their conceptualization that nothing meaningful can be done. By placing the burden on abstract stories, rather than speculating on current social capacities for change or dealing with the muddy nature of sociality to rewrite the story towards actual social transition, their foreword allows for a sunset of the Western story.

An article by venture capitalist and aid worker Vinay Gupta (2011) addresses the inconsistent narrational space between the practice of life and a theory of living by approaching death as the thing that ultimately joins the two. Gupta writes of his experience being born into the Hindu cult of Kapalika, whose members “traditionally operated under a simple vow: they could only eat out of a bowl made from the top part of a human skull. It is one way to live intimately with death.” Rhetorically, he asks, “what is the social role of one who understands that all this will end?” (77) He has two answers; the first of which is as follows:

The social function of the Kapalika is only to know. This does not sound so much, only to know, but to live in the awareness of the truth accomplishes dual functions. First, it slowly compels one to act differently, by degrees. Perhaps we

say one ton of carbon each is our real limit and then over ten years try to approach it. Perhaps we say each meal I eat from this bowl is one meal nearer becoming as dead as its donor and then try to live right, whatever that means by our lights. This individual function, to change what we live, to be in accordance with the truth that things end, is the fundamental satyagraha. (77)

The second answer, he considers to be “a bone of hope”; that the Kapalika bears the truth that the avoidance of death’s truths is worse than death itself. That, “Death cannot be avoided, but its avoidance can be avoided.” Living with death for Gupta means being in ongoing sumptuary relation as articulated in the following manner:

Go to Paris one last time. Enjoy the steak. As you bite off and chew these experiences of the outgoing global order, consuming a little of the death of the world, taste it fully, this life of unbridled excess and borrowing against the accounts of future generations.

It tastes good, regardless of what it means.

And then, one day, in awareness, the bitterness behind the sweetness can be tasted, and we lose all desire to live by the suffering of others, and honest, non-destructive labor becomes enough. (78–79)

Hegel’s concept of abstract essence and the universal Spirit sits differently in relation to Agamben’s description of *whatever*. The *whatever* is that thing that sits independently from both the particular and the universal; it conjoins them. By Hegel’s logic, the particulars of life and the *whatever* singularity exist only in reference toward a brilliant universal. Hegel’s project diminishes the particular and the objective example as pale translations of universality. What this study refers to as bourgeois culture, and what Hegel simply refers to as culture, is employed as abstract law to orient society towards its own monumental universality. By the time of Gupta’s writing, the monument of capitalism has been erected for he and Kingsnorth to comfortably watch it sinking back into the earth. This is the uncivilized writing *Dark Mountain* describes: morose, wan and only slightly shocked at the appearance of its own bio-cultural limits.

What is unsatisfying from a political standpoint in Gupta's musings is how his writing foreshortens the ethical horizons of this interrogation. His concern for climate change stops at the edge of his class horizon by suggesting that having that last glass of wine in Paris is the final point of possible suffering and the greatest of ethical allowance. It's romantic, yet ethically shortened bearing in mind how current research suggests that climate change will only exacerbate current inequality.<sup>175</sup> To the extent that Hegel's Enlightenment ontology helped colonize and industrialize the globe through its ontology of relational negation and abstract evaluation that shares much in common with the abstractive power of capital and finance; and to the extent that it helps maintain the current political order, it sets the stage for the crisis of global ecology as a singular apocalypse. This is the argument that political ecologist Karsten Schulz infers when critiquing the ontological turn in relation to the concept of the Anthropocene noting that both "epistemic and ontological hegemony coincide with the appropriation and reinterpretation of indigenous art, language and culture." (128) The appropriation of other narratives by bourgeois forms only bolsters bourgeois relations on a dying planet.

In the same issue of *Dark Mountain*, author John Rember questions life and its stories as though he were a pragmatic Hobbesian or morose Hegelian. A pragmatic Hobbesian because of his appreciation of the stability that moral and ethical law provides; a morose Hegelian because he recognizes the psychological and social harm that these lawly universal narratives promulgate. Like Gupta, Rember's prose is sincere and engaging. And though Gupta and Rember's roots are continents apart, they both only encounter the ontological crisis of climate change in the Euro-American context. Rember's article

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175 Shulz (2007) describes how inequality has been ontologically written into not only the north/south divide, but also upon the access of gender in relation to who historically has been deemed worthy of having meaningful interests: "A long history of violence, racism and discrimination that is related to western industrialization and colonial appropriation is certainly testament to the fact that not all humans always count as human, and that animals and the environment often count as mere things. Simultaneously, it must be acknowledged that the historically instituted fracture lines of inequality that still pervade contemporary biosocial relations are not simply geographical and economic in nature. While the global North-South divide continues to be a highly influential concept for the analysis of geographical and economic power asymmetries, various lines of inequality are also drawn according to categories such as species, gender, race, class, or sexual orientation." (128)

See also Agarwal and Narain (1991).

comes to a crescendo through a shadow narrative featuring the figures of a pair of men named Frank and Dave. In this narrative, Frank's belief in the risks of climate change move him to Alaska, while Dave is a climate skeptic who gains from its panics through stock market investments. As Rember concludes:

Fortunately, Frank and Dave are headed for consensus. Eventually Dave will join Frank in Alaska for cabbage-and-bear stew or Frank will move south to join Dave's brokerage as a junior partner. They are bound together in ways they don't consciously understand. In spite of their friendship and good will toward each other, each of their false selves is fighting for its life when they get into an argument. The false self that wins gets to write the story for the false self that loses. That's the nature of Frank and Dave, and unfortunately for their and our real selves, that's the nature of humanity. The false selves of the winners get to write the narrative for the false selves of the losers, which is another reason not to place your faith in History. (2011 19)

For Rember, the crisis of having meaningful ends is but a sport bound by North American finance, geography and the inconsequential game of abstract winners and losers. These are the rational ways these people manage the crisis, on a personal level, though judged through a relatively stable public stage. For him, the unasked question that the crisis begs is answered thusly: "Buddhists say there's no such thing as a real self, but suggest that reality can be found in chopping wood and carrying water, which is a gnomic way of saying that reality – and the authentic self, if it exists – lives in doing and not in being..." (19) Within another context, with different order and laws, his spiritual inquiry might matter differently. Yet within the North American field made of market players, this is literally the spirituality of free finance over fixed capital. It is also, by Hegel, the dialect of the *worldly Spirit* rationally working itself out.

*Dark Mountain's* writers are but one collection of a multitude of voices; as individuals their personal interests surely can be forgiven. Gupta and Rember's shrinking from the collective to the individual can be justified. Why as individuals are they tasked with providing answers to a crisis of at least 500 years, made on the backs of colonized people,



creatures and landscapes? Beyond Hegel's conceptualization, but informed by his logic, when one abstractly looks at such individual responses to real crisis, one is again reminded of the concept of the general intellect. "The general intellect is the stage at which mental abstractions are immediately, in themselves, real abstractions." (Virno 2004 64) In the realm of abstraction, any way to socially relate has the possibility of being valued in a universal system; Rember asks the reader to trust in this spirit via finance with the faith that the market will abide. For Hegel, divine law unconsciously organizes social life, while human law allows for society's meaningful development. For Marx (1993), the general intellect is a competence of the general class of all people, and reflects the sum total of all available knowledges and competencies working within and through capitalist relation. Virno (2004 66) and Toscano (2008 284) agree that for itself, the general intellect has no ends but to trace and further develop social dynamics, contingent to capitalism. For Toscano, the general intellect's primary activity is not worker emancipation but the facilitation of cognitive capitalism, where social intelligences are universally utilized to biopolitically continue capitalist development within and against the interests of the general populations. (285)

#### **4b Art History and the making of autonomous objects**

Regardless of what *Dark Mountain* thinks about the Enlightenment, as established earlier with McLuhan, as a matter of practice, magazine publishing normalizes cultural practices that are central to modernity. Magazines normalize modernity by circulating notions seemingly stripped bare of the particular contexts of their production. They – like all journals, magazines, fine art and other things culturally produced in societies that are heir to the bourgeois revolution – value ideational, aspirational or other conceptual notions in their distributively autonomous form.

The relative ease of distributing abstract things today appears as a non-event, and the ease of distributing abstract thought contributes to common intelligence and the Marxian "general intellect". So, despite its focus on *uncivilization*, *Dark Mountain* carries on. Their particular editorial work is made opaque behind their books' front matter that, rather than accounting for the particular logistical achievements in each issue's

completion, simply lists editors' names, typesetter and name and location of the book's actual printing. Perhaps in a nod to its ecological ethic, the issue has a seal from the Forest Stewardship Council ensuring that its paper comes from sustainably managed forests.

On Issue Five's cover, artist Eunah Cho's fractal drawings push an unfolding pattern from front to back cover. On this cover there is no journal name; *Dark Mountain* appears on the book's spine though Cho's exuberant image obscures it. The word *Dark* is lettered bigger than the *Mountain* in a way suggesting that Cho's drawings may have caused the word to shrink. Cho's statement in the front matter suggests the prosaic ease with which she is drawn to abstraction:

I don't remember the day anymore. Probably I started by sitting in front of the white paper as usual. Not a map, but eager anticipation is useful to find an unknown thing.

I kept gazing at the white blank till some lines appeared, first forming shapes, then colors and textures seemed to follow.

I felt like jumping over a wall to peek into something. It was very short but remained as a shuddering sensation. Everything was new but familiar. I have had it before and I get it back now.

I am playing with the mysterious universe and my work is the record of my experience. One more thing, I met a friend who has so many names. Guess who?  
(2014)

Seemingly contingent to nothing, abstraction appears to expand upon an open field. As Lévi-Strauss suggests, the capacity for abstraction and its circulation is a trans-historic capacity distinct from capitalism and the recent historical era. The example of the pre-Colombian cross-continental sign language<sup>176</sup> employed by North Americans attests to the exchange of ideational and material abstractions<sup>177</sup> across great distance. Seemingly

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176 See Wurtzburg and Campbell (1995) for a discussion of the use of sign language as a pre-Columbian, transcontinental communication technique.

177 See for example Graeber (2001, 2014) on how, anthropologically, things have been utilized

unhindered by the notion of collapse that it entertains because the collapse only makes conceptual appearances, *Dark Mountain* keeps publishing serial issues. And yet, its abstraction is not directionless; definitionally bound to its editorial decisions and forwarded by the magazine's techniques of distribution, its movements are necessarily directional within an abstract plain. In order to continue describing the organizational capacities of abstractions within bourgeois culture, it is useful to look at the invention of the discipline of Art History.

Within *Aithesis* (2013), Jacques Rancière describes Art History's disciplinary emergence in Germany just before Hegel's era. Rancière begins his account through a reading of Johan Joachim Winckelmann's essay *History of Art in Antiquity*, originally published in 1764. In Rancière's view<sup>178</sup>, Winckelmann's work writes into history a class of objects (fine art) that previously had no unique history. Winckelmann's project introduces the conceptual separation of works of art from whichever society that particularly produced them – it is this separation that inaugurates Art History. Previous to his study, historians understood the arts as enmeshed within any society's general modes of being, or in certain cases, the proof of the vision of unique individuals. Art objects had not been conceptualized as having a unique developmental history internal to themselves across space and time. Winckelmann's work is said to have influenced Kant, whose concept of aesthetic judgment echoes Winckelmann's quest for a transhistoric concept of beauty.<sup>179</sup> It certainly influenced Hegel, who identified with Winckelmann's quest for universal truths.<sup>180</sup>

Winckelmann's study enacts an objective view upon a class of objects named Art. By doing so, his thought process develops a historical trajectory, not of humanity but of

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as both mediums for and objects of exchange across the scope of human history.

178 Winckelmann's work was renowned in his era. Hegel (1988 63) credits him with the invention of an art history, Goethe retraced his travels throughout southern Europe (Bell 2016) and his philosophical legacy was subject to debates between Hegel and Herder (Gjesdal 2006).

179 See Friborg (2015).

180 See Friborg (2015), Gjesdal (2006).

things that can independently develop in dialogue with humanity. Like the history of a newly declared nation, Art History creates an autonomous order to be narrated as art's history. Winckelmann constructs this narrative line in order to critique and influence the development of artwork contemporary to his day. He does so by constructing the retrospective art historical form, building this thought upon a fragment of Greek statuary resting in the Vatican – the Belvedere Torso; he found it to be beautiful. His writing makes art a transhistoric and autonomously existing project aimed at crystallizing the beautiful thing as something special for all to engage with, rather than as fetching objects that require only ordinary regard. Rancière connects the invention of art history with the near-contemporaneous conceptualizations of whiggish history: and narratives of national destiny. “[F]or art to exist as the sensible environment of works, history must exist as the form of intelligence of collective life.” (Rancière 2013 Ch1)

Attendant to the notion of a nation with a history and an art with a destiny is a public whose role it is to distinguish and participate somehow in these achievements. Here, artists' intentions are subsumed by the meaning that any viewer sees revealed through their forms. Art History, and the bourgeois concept of Hegelian universality besides dispositifs of economic and state reality help interpret meaning. Discovery of political import in reception rather than through authorial intention aligns with this study's method of finding meaning in *Dark Mountain's* (or any other cultural thing's) published words rather than by directly interviewing the authors. Further, this suggests a key ethic of abstractions – that abstractions can serve as plastics tool for whoever encounters them. Remember, Winckelmann was making political in his day objects that were authored centuries beforehand.

*Dark Mountain* curates a range of opinions and moods regarding the eventuality of collapse. This collapse occurs on Western terms, demanding little in way of social reorganization in its advance. For most writers, the collapse demands a reckoning that is at once extreme and mundane. Extreme when it reflects on death, mundane when it proposes, as Rember does, that such death is but a game of one person's gain and another's loss. An evaluation of *Dark Mountain's* “non-political” nature recognizes that

its abstract forwarding of potentially meaningful content through a seemingly autonomous conceptual realm remains within the bourgeois tradition. Their non-political imaginary obscures other political ways of organizing life in difference to the current mode of capitalist and abstract management.

## **5 Politics**

To complete the critical evaluation of *Dark Mountain*, this section begins with a discussion of Marx and Hegel's conceptualization of what universal political thought brings. In comparison, *Dark Mountain's* conceptualization is found to be lacking in terms of its general usefulness to the multitude. Therefore, this chapter concludes by looking across contemporary political theory in order to gather productive concepts for a cultural response to the era of social trouble that the Chthulucene highlights.

Hegel imagines his dialectical process of negational thought to be painful, for it is borne of displacement and alienation. Alienation is the painful recognition that one is not in absolute harmony with the other – for Hegel, it is painful that difference exists in the world. Recoiling against any further universal accounting, *Dark Mountain* assumes that the West will bear emotional pain in the witnessing of other people's actual suffering. Beyond sadness, *Dark Mountain* offers nothing. Their position finds affinity with the master that Hegel metaphorically employs in his Master/Slave dialectic. The dialectic describes the functioning of the Enlightenment process within the realm of human culture. Hegel aligns the Master with the universal, which is “the independent consciousness whose essential nature is to be for itself”. The slave he identifies as “the other” and is “dependent”, as its “essential nature is simply to live or to be for another.” (115) Though Hegel recognizes the ties that bind the Master to the slave, it is his supposedly Universal interests that must win in this game. This metaphor's structuring logic bases individual power in abstraction beyond fear of death rather than in contingent life; it orients dialectical action towards universal idealism rather than to concrete and entwined sociality.

In his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, Marx critiques Hegel's ends of

world history in universal Spirit for his fidelity to ideas rather than to the labor of remaking the world saying, “The only labor which Hegel knows and recognizes is *abstractly mental* labor.” (2009 67) Marx’s work is one of the most politically impactful responses to Hegel’s ontologies. Rather than revealing Spirit, Marx suggests that remaking the world is a material task to be played out through human history. By highlighting *Dark Mountain*’s ends of history in relation to Marx’s proposal, this study points towards conversations regarding real political organizing that are continued in Chapter 3 with a discussion of the PAH. Insofar as it is ‘not political’, *Dark Mountain* offers little of unique value for the study beyond its ability to host an open-ended investigation around forms of cultural thought. So, after a discussion of Marx’s contra-Hegelian politics, this section defines the political limits of *Dark Mountain*,<sup>181</sup> as well as those of Hegelian and Marxist discourses, in order to posit what can be affirmed in cultural work beyond the sociality of political organizing.

Marx’s criticism of Hegel’s dialectical process is reserved for its ends rather than its means. He recognizes, like Hegel, the unique capacity of humans to rationally remake the world;<sup>182</sup> it is the ends of that remade world that hold the difference. “The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it” he says. (Marx & Engels 1998 571) Marx affirms Hegel’s dialectical process of historical development,

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181 An early critique of the *Manifesto* occurred in a literature review by John Gray (2009) in the *New Statesman*. Gray’s thoughts mirror initial critiques leveled by Monbiot – that though *Dark Mountain* suggests that people do nothing but reap the benefits of civilizational collapse, “The result has never been the stable anarchy that is sometimes envisioned in the poetry of Jeffers. Instead, it is the thugs and fanatics who promise to restore order that triumph, whether Lenin and Stalin in Russia, Mao in China, or Hitler and assorted petty dictators in Europe. It is the old Hobbesian doctrine – one that has never been successfully superseded.”

182 Marx’s (2009) thought directly relates to the previous chapter’s focus on the nature/culture split. According to Marx, under capitalist relations, individuals become strangers to each other, as labor is alienated and estranged from humanness and the means of production. Capitalism removes the great majority of people’s innate socio-political capacity to co-develop the world, thereby reducing their being to the status of mere animals. “[E]ating, drinking, procreating, or at most in his dwelling and in dressing-up, etc.; and in his human functions he no longer feels himself to be anything but an animal.” (30) Marx distinguishes the purely animal human from the being of the human-species – of a species with world-making capacities. For Marx, the collective spirit of humanity is not an abstraction, it is species-being – the conscious collective capacity through labor to construct and maintain the world for overall human benefit. (31)

but critiques the formulation in at least two ways. First, he takes issue with who the active agent is within the dialectical process of alienation and self-conscious return. Marx thinks that the dialectical process is driven not by alienation from who each human individually is,<sup>183</sup> but by alienation from what humanity could be. Second, Marx points to Hegel's mystification of an ideal universal Spirit, recognizing that this ideal is a social construct whose qualities and appreciation are historically variable, contingent and not definitionally universal. Rather than consider them spiritually helpful, Marx finds abstract ideas to be useful in terms of their concrete assistance in developing the worldly environment. Ideally for Marx, abstraction is "*man's* essential powers put to work and that they are therefore but the *path* to the true *human* world." (Marx 2009 66)

Marx's relation to abstraction shares key qualities with Hegel's dialectical process, despite the fact that the particular for Marx has real political weight.<sup>184</sup> For both Hegel and Marx, truths affirm abstract ideals. For Marx, the oscillations between particular and Universal relations only serve to occlude a common species-being.

Man is a species-being, not only because in practice and in theory he adopts the species (his own as well as those of other things) as his object, but – and this is only another way of expressing it – also because he treats himself as the actual, living species; because he treats himself as a *universal* and therefore a free being. (31)

For Marx, the universal provides absolute human freedom, which is his understanding of communism. Here Marx is an idealist, a modernist who recognizes the potency of Enlightenment when labor realizes its universal potential under the negating anvil of wage relations.

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183 Marx identifies in Hegel an individual egotism made universal: "The self-abstracted entity, fixed for itself, is man as *abstract egoist* – *egoism* raised in its pure abstraction to the level of thought." (2009 67)

184 Hegel (1977 140–141) judges reasonable action on the basis of its distance from the bindings of the master/slave relation: "the consciousness which is this truth has this path behind it and has forgotten it, and comes on the scene immediately as Reason; in other words, this Reason which comes immediately on the scene appears only as the certainty for that truth." (141)

For Kingsnorth, to protect pure nature is to defend the spirit of the world. While taking for themselves a certain benefit from nature and labor's objectifications, the "non-political" at *Dark Mountain's* core runs counter to Marx's idealization of man's objectified power as a species, based upon concerns regarding the ecological results of such objectification. Through these environmental justifications, they confuse production of wealth with social justice and recoil at the sight of a global humanity. Within Marxism's broad field of inquiry, there are Marxists that differently concern themselves with results of overproduction,<sup>185</sup> though here the focus remains momentarily on *Dark Mountain*. Kingsnorth critiques politics and sustainable development, which he thinks is the main thrust of contemporary environmental activism. With romantic politics inspired by the "the ridiculous beauty of coral, the mist over the fields at dawn," (58) Kingsnorth is upset that human questions are mixed within green politics. Rather than rebalance total human relations, Kingsnorth imagines that ecology and *Dark Mountain* should only angrily concern themselves with socio-politics when witnessing ecological destruction caused by the general relational nature of the human.<sup>186</sup>

The Robinson Jeffers (1935) poem *Rearmament* that provides *Dark Mountain* its name, suggests that "To change the future... I should do foolishly. / The beauty of modern / Man is not in the person but in the / Disastrous rhythm." *Dark Mountain* finds human capacity for abstraction to bend in at least two ways: one towards the individual, poetic and intellectual powers, the other towards a disastrous species-being. As a collective editorial project though, *Dark Mountain's* output is less misanthropic, rather, it just asks to remain as it is, abstractly. To the extent that *Dark Mountain* actually dismiss enlightenment reason, its collapsitarian-shaming detractors misapprehend the group's

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185 For example, sociologist and eco-philosopher John Belamy Foster's (1999) focus on the concept of the *metabolic rift*, a process that he conceptualizes as occurring as a result of the transition and the second agrarian revolution whose technical interventions into soil science in the mid-nineteenth century allowed for the great population boom that Malthus feared would starve the world. He refers to the metabolic rift as the quality of alienation in work required for humans to sustain levels of agricultural production that natural systems by themselves cannot sustain.

186 Based on the idea that democracy aligns with consumer society, the *Dark Mountain Manifesto* warns against "dupes that talk democracy." (Hine & Kingsnorth 2009 24)



interests as apocalyptic. Their first issue's editorial identifies what they see as mainstream culture's penchant for dualistic thought, which can only trace either utopian or apocalyptic narratives. *Dark Mountain* rightfully, by this study's estimation, warns against such dualisms by critiquing conceptualizations that:

the future will give us either unbroken progress or apocalypse, and there are no spaces between. The spaces between, however, are the spaces in which our real future is likely to be played out. They represent a gap in our cultural imagination; a gap in which the *Dark Mountain Project* has pitched its camp. (Kingsnorth & Hine 2010a 3)

Nevertheless, *Dark Mountain's* "uncivilization" is built upon a political articulation that purposefully, or not, condemns much of the globe to unquestioned and unnecessary exposure to brutality and death. It shares with Hegel a bourgeois disinterest in particular relations, though in practice favors actual relations structured by the law and state violence and not some gnostic universal.<sup>187</sup> Their general disinterest in human organizational capacities provides little of help to thinking through how culture might be able to reshape multitudinous human relations in the face of the climate crisis. In order to go forward, in dialogue with all that has been previously discussed, this study must look elsewhere for political thought regarding how cultural forms participate between the particular contexts where they are multitudinously experienced and the universal from where the forms seem to arrive.

### **5a Other politics in the face of collapse and need**

It is useful to continue with attention to the anthropological. For it is on the conceptualizations of humanity that managerial forms intercept with the actual human limits of the multitude. Sylvia Wynter (2003) conceptualizes the anthropological alienation that other-racialized and other-gendered people who are never anthropologically considered in themselves, but only for the sustenance of Western Judeo-Christian secular society (2003). She notes how by normalizing Darwinian

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<sup>187</sup> Wynter refers to these universals as things of "Nation-state subunits of human symbolic (m2) reproduction." (Wynter 2003 271–270)

thought's "survival of the fittest" through capitalist logic, and by seeing all people as having naturally advantaged or disadvantaged natures, Western regimes are able to dominate because of how they stilt all questions within a ethico-poetic matrix that gives the "natural" economic, political and social advantage to those that just happened to be born richer, whiter, more Male and within the actual boundaries of Europe and North America – because of the facts of life. Accordingly, all reasoning that is uncritically worked through this matrix bends in praxis to their favor.

Critical theorist Denise Ferreira da Silva (2015) identifies Wynter's project as one that questions the political effects of answers that must, because of how their questions seem to relate to the whole world, have universal answers. In light of this, Ferreira da Silva asks:

[W]hether or not justice can be imagined from within the available modalities of knowledge, which includes Foucault's archaeological and genealogical tools along with the already known historical and scientific tools, with all the necessary erasures and engulfments they presuppose and entail. As we saw earlier, for Wynter, scientific knowledge, specifically the natural sciences, may play an important role by unveiling the nonhistorical or extrahuman (natural / biological) structuring of cultural or ideological mechanisms. Foucault, however, conceives of knowledge, the modern versions of it, as sites of exercise of domination, which produce the very subjects it subjugates.

(103)

Ferreira da Silva considers Foucault's understanding of how knowledge is the ultimate determining factor in the outcome of an event. She sees Foucault as informed by the Hegelian logic of universal truths when he gives to knowledge (not narrativity) the juridical-political capacity to cut across categories of life as the "principle of right". (103–104) An example of such a movement, as discussed above, is Foucault's (2007) description of the Physiocratic use of reason within the boundaries of state practice to transform French biopolitical and social relations. Foucault (2003) defines the general order of contemporary state logic as a particular dialectical process – one that works, with

biopolitical power as its engine, through state discourse between who it imagines its people are historically and who they (philosophically) could be. By “principal of right”, Foucault is not arguing that knowledge bends towards justice, but rather that knowledge is effectively employed by state-interested actors across difference to organize either the same or other ways of being naturally – with the state always appearing as a generous actor in relation to *whatever* determination of facts it chooses, (58) and employed to make the decision seem rational. Foucault sees Hegelian dialectical reasoning as taking the philosophical place of the juridical-political position previously held by Aristocratic state functionaries – reason universally opens up as public logic the more private interests of the historically sovereign state. Yet, to the extent that Foucault understands he is describing an apparently undeniable effect of knowledge, da Silva reads him as blind to the definitional birthing moment of contemporary government. The final aims of the latter are, according to da Silva, to maintain bourgeois power. Da Silva recognizes the universal man of Hegelian rationality as “exclusive to post-Enlightenment Europe”. (2015 98) That is, even in non-European states, the employment of rational judgment opens up and policies state performances towards Eurocentric logics and concepts, logistics and infrastructures. Or, in Foucault’s example, not in favor of knowledge but in favor of the one who can most simply appear knowledgeable because they have always controlled the narrative by a variety of means.

Neither this study nor da Silva (102) discount opportunities when concepts like Universal Rights can be employed to argue for the relief of dispossessed people in front of, for example, the International Criminal Tribunal, or through human rights frameworks. But, as the problem with Foucault’s definition of knowledge reflects, such techniques rely on “one ‘descriptive statement of the human’” (102) and therefore end up replicating over the longer-term many of the ongoing issues that such legalistic presentations seek to resolve. The problems that a cultural policy of the multitude hopes to resolve must, by definition, function with an awareness that its solutions must function for many definitions of the human, and not to one particular human’s benefit.

This is what is so unsatisfying about *Dark Mountain* – that its abstract non-politics appear

to offer so little to other people. The question of policy in this thesis is a political problem whose answers are by nature Universal, which includes people on the wrong side of the Mediterranean or Rio Grande. As the discussion of bourgeois art demonstrates, abstraction communicated in form and thought appear as a weightless encyclopedia<sup>188</sup> of managerial actions employable to *whatever* ends, that if uncritically utilized bend towards Western power. The task at hand is to find a model for how, as cultural policy, these forms can be multitudinously utilized in a manner such that they don't bend in utility towards relentless social violence that also indifferently drives climate change.

As response to her question, da Silva offers two methodological prompts – Irigaray and *Rivolta Femminile* are also instructive alongside da Silva's. Irigaray, because of her awareness of political systems is instructive in relation to da Silva's first point; that though it is not possible to write an answer to this question that is inclusive of all ways of being human, an attempt should nevertheless be made. Irigaray's (1996) *I Love to You* (1996) is written to a male comrade in the context of a polarized Italian Feminist, one where *Rivolta Femminile* (1970/1991) would audaciously write *Lets Spit on Hegel* based on their repulsion at the Male world-ordering that Hegel's universality completes. Irigaray is familiar with and employs a similar argument against Hegelian Universality – she reads Hegel for his chapters on the family and observes how in his dialectical process of history, women serve as martyrs. (13) She also recognizes that the Marxism of her day had objectively failed women by placing the woman/other as second within a male phallogentric communism. (19) Nevertheless, to her male comrade and to the project of communism, Irigaray remains committed. "The universal – if this word can still be used here – consists in the fulfillment of life and not in submission to death as Hegel would have it." (24) For Irigaray, the continuation of any human political project must acknowledge the split nature of humanity – as male and female: gendered difference is

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188 Discussing the development of the concept of a general ecology of abstract knowledge managing the world, media and cultural theorist Erich Hörl discusses philosopher Gilbert Simondon's concept of the three stages of encyclopedic imagination. He names the "ethical encyclopaedism of the Renaissance, the technical encyclopaedism of the Great Encyclopedia and the Enlightenment, and finally, the technological encyclopedias of his own cybernetic era." (Hörl 119) Hörl goes on to suggest another current phase where knowledge is utilized to modulate processes rather than to control their outcomes.

the human-historic necessity of actual human social reproduction. For Irigaray, there is a necessity for civil law to recognize the multitude of difference that is the gendered becoming of humanity. Through this law, relation should be understood as a conversation between one and the other whose ultimate difference cannot be properly accounted for. For Irigaray this unknowing suggests the law needs to support rather than define difference.<sup>189</sup> As Poe (2015) suggests, gender is the essential but non-essentialized relation of a male and a female; where one is, the other must be other and essentially somehow different in ways that are not defined as biological genders. Following da Silva's suggestion, this study must then have a political cultural policy, though one that acknowledges at its core the unknown other that will find other ways of being beside it.

To da Silva's second point then: and here also in reference to *Rivolta Femminile's* essay condemning the sexist through-line drawn from Hegel, Marx, Engels and Lenin universal notions and the actually existing appearances of socialism. Against *whatever* state project, *Rivolta Femminile* writes, "We will no longer allow anyone to treat us as the bearers of the species. Our children belong to nobody; neither to their fathers nor to the state. We will give them to themselves, just as we reclaim ourselves to ourselves." (55) Their call for a Feminist movement is instructive, "There are no goals, there is the present of our here and now. We are the world's dark past, we are giving shape to the present." (59) This insistence of politics having no politics imminent to anything but to freely be in this world as it is, is suggestive of da Silva's notion that new theory "should begin with asking different questions, methodological rather than ontological ones: instead of the question of who and what we are, we need to go deeper into the investigation of how we come up with answers to the questions." (da Silva 2016 104) The questions she refers to are those who by their nature relate to the universal. Between da Silva's theory and *Rivolta Femminile's* call, this study looks to an anthropologically human (multitudinous) praxis that does not, to *whatever* possible extent, allow the world's dark past to shape its present by paying for it through the order of the future. The culture of this policy must

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189 "Sexual difference is, as it were, the most powerful motor of a dialectic without masters or slaves. This dialectic does not have to be tragic because it renders obsolete a certain number of oppositions required for the dialectic of a unique and solipsistic subject. It necessitates a law of a persons appropriate to their natural reality, that is, to their sexed identity." (Irigaray 1996 52)

seek multitudinous ends rather than ends that fix the multitude to with abstract law.

Cultural concepts in this time of collapse play out as *whatever* torque that rests between the scales of living – between the particulars that organize life in the near term via particular ways of being commonly human and more general long-term governing concepts. Some of *Dark Mountain*'s culture looks towards Western particulars that are not yet organized because climate change and capitalism have not yet ravaged everything. These longer-term concerns work in a theological manner that Monbiot does not address; one with a (secular or neo-pagan) spiritual conception of meaning attendant to life and death. As objects produced in this time of climate change, this study acknowledges *Dark Mountain*'s rightful place among the multitudinous common library of speculative and managerial notions for culture.<sup>190</sup> They name their notions “uncivilization” – and as multitude rather than as being usefully political, their contemplative work finds resonance; for example, it is fascinating to read what a EuroAmerican Arch Druid might say about death. Yet ultimately, their primary theoretical utility is simply that they continue to publish on the topic over a period of time and are just useful to help contemplate a variety of concepts. Against their ‘uncivilization’, a meaningful culture, as Irigaray, Wynter, da Silva, *Rivolta Femminile* and others suggest, other things circulate without foreclosing on other ways of future living.

Unsatisfied by *Dark Mountain*, this chapter moves towards a synthesis whereby politics are identified from within the contemporary discursive field according to their usefulness for a discussion of how culture can autonomously carry multitudinous meaning through Chthulucenic ecological collapse.

### **5b Differently political responses to dispossession**

Briefly then, this section presents cultural thought based upon multitudinous activity generated in affirmative response to dispossession; where the dispossessed are

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190 Bernard Dionysius Geoghegan's (2011) *From Information Theory to French Theory: Jakobson, Lévi-Strauss, and the Cybernetic Apparatus* notes that the encyclopedia upon which cybernetics is built remains as a benefit to humanity, cybernetics' failure as an interdisciplinary project to teleologically determine historical outcomes through cultural thought is clear.

understood as those who are forcibly made other to *whatever* law. This study finds Monsieur Dupont's (2003) two-stage anti-political formulation to be useful in this regard. In their essay *Nihilist Communism*, Monsieur Dupont points out that it is in contexts and through events rather than through abstract revolutionary consciousness that possibilities for radical change actually occur.<sup>191</sup> They describe how in the context of fleeting events, factories are easily occupied, and that such radical gestures can lead to much more.<sup>192</sup> For the interests of this study, we take the word "factory" to mean any site of conflict, including but not limited to those related to social reproduction.<sup>193</sup> The interest in social reproduction is important in the context of climate change, for it is assumed that the capacities everywhere for social and biological need are and will be stressed by climate change. Cultural politics matter conceptually to Monsieur Dupont's second phase; after the factories have been occupied, "universal humanity" has the potential to ideologically insert itself into the occupation. (9) As all that precedes in this chapter demonstrates, difficulty arises around the assertion of what it is that constitutes "the human". Monsieur Dupont's way of avoiding the inhuman in defining the human is to simply avoid following or constructing ideological definitions. (17) They do this because they recognize ideology to be at the base of all things inhuman; ideology allows activity to bend towards law, not care. When the "objective conditions" of what is political are formalized against contextual situations, governmental violence appears. (17)

To an extent soon to be made clear, this study agrees with Monsieur Dupont's basic precepts; a meaningful cultural policy of the multitude is based on a cultural and then social praxis that opens the world to particular human rearrangements that never

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191 In describing the particulars of the first phase, Monsieur Dupont says, "How the working class goes about the first stage of the revolution we can only guess at..." (10)

192 By the relationship between working class consciousness and the Communist or other parties, Monsieur Dupont says that workers here find themselves in a "non-conscious holding of productive power by the working class." (10)

193 Monsieur Dupont asks for a stricter read saying, "The working class is nothing but the collective position of those who are brought closest to the machinery of the capitalist system". (16) Without discarding the possibility that particular sites of conflict may be more meaningful than others, this study discards their definition according to class, seeing that climate change affects all relations in every way, and that the conflict between the multitude and capital are wider than those seen exclusively within the limits set by the factory.

foreclose other possibilities. This study also agrees that the grounds for radical practice are based on the multitude's intimate relation to changing material and social conditions. Again, it is the multitude's experience of climate change that matters, not the law's. It is assumed that climate change provides abundant contexts for transformative possibility to emerge.

Poet and critical theorist Joshua Clover's *Riot. Strike. Riot.* (2016) analyzes the Marxist implication of insurrections that are made easy by actual historical and cultural conditions – for example where hunger makes clear that structural relations no longer meet the needs of the multitude. The riot is interesting because, as Clover suggests, it is a seemingly spontaneous eruption of unrest, occurring with an ease that mirrors the sudden occupation of the factory according to Monsieur Dupont. Clover further suggests that only the material conditions of capitalism produce the need to communize resources or relations and that there are no other grounds for the political riot. Clover's "communization" is akin to Monsieur Dupont's "making human" in that both are the ideal horizon towards which they strive in political struggle. In positing that only material conditions in themselves are imminent to communization,<sup>194</sup> Clover embodies theorist Benjamin Noys' (2011) observation that the *Communization tangent* (to which *Dupont* and Clover belong) is disinterested in articulating meaningful universality outside of the commune. In Noys' articulation, the unity of Communization's conceptual trans-historic commune is made materially sensible only upon the awareness of immediate needs to negate particular material conditions, communicated as a "promise of a total revolution that will achieve its aim in process." (Noys 2011 15) Under Clover and Dupont's articulation, anything beyond immediate process posited as universal ideal needlessly opens itself up for exploitation. For Clover (2016) the moment is what matters: "Things fall apart, core and periphery cannot hold. We turn round and round in the night and are consumed by fire."

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194 Clover here suggests that the commune of the riot contains its organizing principles within it saying, "Within the transformations of the present, the form of the commune is unthinkable without the modulation from traditional working class to an expanded proletariat. That is to say, it is not oriented by productive laborers, but rather by the heterogeneous population of those without reserves." (90) With regards propaganda beyond the event of the commune, Clover asserts the material conditions of life within the contradictions between capitalism and the dispossessed will serve as propaganda enough. (89)



(91)

Yet, if climate plays a role in the nature of things falling apart, climate must be understood as a long-term governing effect in relation to capitalism rather than an immediately independent variable governed by capital. Climate, by the force of tidal wave or earthquake has dispossessed people for millennia, regardless of capitalist governance. Historic climactic relations and other things that govern human organization exceed the capitalist praxis that structurally allows for the possibility of dialectical negation; nature's wildness is indifferent to *whatever* human organization, including markets. An indifference to the relative autonomy of nature is not unique to either Clover, insurrectionary Marxists or Marxists in general. But what is of interest here is the extent to which insurrectionary Communists foreshorten their view of the commune's relation with the human, discounting other meaningful relations that bind humans in nature. While within Marx, the *whatever* remains oriented towards a universal of Communist species-being, Communization posits that the sensible particulars of life are what determine means and ends, without much attention to universal temporalities that nevertheless frame any particular humanity and its commune. Humans like any animals need some consistency over time and space; relationality across difference and time is culturally maintained and cannot be discounted.

Political theorist and activist Bue Rübner Hansen's (2015) analysis of the crisis of social reproduction attendant to the Communization theories aligns with this study's understanding of necessary temporal awareness. Hansen also affirms Communization's precepts that politics most meaningfully emerge within the particulars of crisis – but concurrent with Toscano (2011a, 2011b) and Noys (2011) he agrees that Communization obfuscates particular and more general time and distance-based relations and practices that help organize necessary relations within and between the commune and others. Hansen recognizes struggle as an ongoing practice<sup>195</sup> as much as it is a momentary event.

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195 “Taking seriously the fact that resistances and networks of solidarity preexist irruptions of open struggle means to go beyond the faith in spontaneity. This entails an ethics of militant, embedded research, knowledge production, and popular pedagogy, which proceeds through practices of collectively mapping the possibilities of composition, and reflections on how to

Focus on relation and ongoing practice allows the dispossessed to remain together with the “possibility of mass action rather than the barbarism of the war of all proletarians against all.” (11) Hansen’s observation deepens the meaning of *whatever* culture’s contingent universality in relation to climate change; *whatever* culture’s being is concerned with the preservation of possibilities as much as the making possible. The universal is more than any one crystalline singularity, like “communism” or “peace.” Rather, Hansen also finds that the cultural universal is an idea that, like the multitude, exceeds itself and should be approached multivalently.<sup>196</sup>

Anthropologically, to regard the preservation of the possible as much as the making possible requires paying attention to creative possibilities contingent to the precarious social multitude, contexts and the cultural contents of contexts that are affirmed or negated by governance (climate or human), or that need to be negated or affirmed. Transformation and struggles are things built over time and that also occur in time. Chapter 1 demonstrated through Glowczewski and McKee how easily universal cultural notions can be employed in, or abstracted from, particular situations in ways that go beyond the concern of the situation. The introduction also states how a cultural policy for the multitude is relational to the multitudes rather than to governmental practice. The fact of this relation turns out to be consequential. A cultural policy must understand how cultural objects are encountered everywhere in immediate social life that is imbedded and only partially distinguishable from ongoing cultural ways. While particular ways for long-term livability become particularly destabilized in the Chthulucene, the multitude encounters concepts that are objectively distinguishable or indistinguishable from who it is or what it wants to be. That cultural workers can critically recognize their distinction makes their labor independent of immediate being. Between da Silva and Hansen, what is learned about the autonomous cultural forms produced by cultural workers under this

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connect and extend networks of trust and solidarity. It implies sharing tools of organizing and tactics of struggle, taking measure of the rumors and whispers, and engaging in small struggles in ways that can help them transform fear and mistrust into courage and solidarity.” (Hansen 35–36)

196 “Communism is not an abstract Kantian ‘ideal’ nor a plan, nor a universal and global horizon from which to judge all struggles or find hope. Communism, instead, is best described as a possible emergent telos in processes of combination, when they fold back on themselves and become self-reproducing, self-organized and capable of defending themselves.” (Hansen 37)

policy is that they must preserve possibility for particular multitudinous ways of being, while also relating possibility over time with others that also socially navigate a changing life. The following chapter, which focuses on the *Plataforma de Afectados Por La Hipoteca* (the PAH) takes care therefore to recognize the varying faces the multitude puts on in relation to the managerial/governmental objects they encounter, to socially work through how to relate to (cultural) governance while remaining open to the variable world.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Multitudinous Leadership: the PAH**

The goal of this chapter is to demonstrate one example of the multitude's reorientation, through a variety of discursive and performative actions, in relation to the reality of systemic change. Here, the multitude works to reorient common sense in relation to governmental arrangements that no longer meet the multitude's interests. The PAH is understood as multitudinous, while governmental arrangements are understood as cultural; this is ultimately a narrational difference. Before turning to the engaged summaries written partially from embedded research with the Barcelona PAH, this chapter begins with a theoretical discussion regarding the general intellect and the idea of leadership versus governance, among other things. Theory is presented here to help the reader understand how multitudinous activity may come to stand in for leadership within crisis, and how the PAH's sociality provides it with real currency to drive social and political change.

A core concern of this study is the multitude's intimate experiences with systemic failures; as multitude, the PAH offers an opportunity for participant observation with a group of people transforming their feelings of helplessness, resulting from systemic failure, into something different. The financial crisis of 2008 resulted in countless home foreclosures and evictions throughout Spain – destabilizing both homeowner and renter experiences. PAH members felt the injury, brutality and loss from capitalist governance and its cultural appearance throughout the crisis. PAH members affected by the crisis transformed their situations and through this have been able to halt evictions, squat homes, change housing policy and help transform regional and national politics. The PAH is at the core of the thesis because of how they manage as multitude to reorganize relations to themselves, the city, the banks and law – by collectively processing experiences of the crisis within social relations. So, in relation to any culture this policy aims to organize stands the PAH's sort of relational thinking that the policy hopes to encounter.

Following initial theoretical discussion, the chapter is divided into two sections that

articulate the valence of activity of the PAH and its members. It describes how social relationships in, to and through the PAH operate; in relation to the debt they have incurred and how their processing reorients active relationships to the wider world. The writing style is detailed and expansive rather than empirical, in order to demonstrate ways in which being exceeds the frameworks that are nevertheless necessary to make sense of things. The first of these subsections (Section 2) focuses on enrollment into the group; it describes experiences of indebted people, their incorporation into the group and how the PAH alters people's perspectives. Then, Section 3 focuses on what the PAH composes beyond itself, first among the informal and general field of social life and then against the cultural practices and laws of the banks and state. These four orientations – incorporation, self-recognition, recognizing the other and the self, working in relation to laws – become meaningful to the study's conclusion.

These orientations demonstrate activity upon the variable axes that the common livable horizon for which the synecdoche named “hope” appears. Hope appears because it is socially constructed upon immediate dispossession. The PAH processually reveals this hopeful horizon by keeping open an active social space to negotiate and perform results-oriented individual and collective activity across this multi-scaled dispositifs of governing dispossession. Within the PAH, this hope is sometimes articulated with the term “dignity” – actively defined by the PAH through discourse and performance in protest. This study understands this dignity as a social ground for structuring forgiving social and political (and therefore cultural) systems that specifically promotes possible livability – a relational concept more clearly articulated throughout the chapter.

Though this chapter may seem to portray the PAH as having governmental capacities that a simple conceptualization of the multitude might want to deny, the PAH is composed by and for the multitude. It is worth remembering Virno's (2008) description at this point, of the relationship between the multitude and governance: “the One which the ‘many’ always carry on their back coincides in many aspects with the transindividual reality that Marx called ‘general intellect’ or ‘social brain’. The general intellect is the name that refers to the ordinary human faculty of thinking with words...” (41) By tracing the PAH's

multitudinous relation to a variety of self and externally given governmental forms, the chapter demonstrates the general intellect as an aptitude general to the multitude. To be multitude here means nothing less than to be capable of having varying relations to governmental determinations, and to remain when governmental structure has failed multitudinous interests.

Central to this chapter's methodology are three periods of participant-observation research within the Barcelona PAH, occurring during the summer of 2013, and in January and May of 2015. As discussed below in section 3b. *Bringing the outside inside*, the Barcelona PAH has an introductory process for researchers so that they can smoothly organize their scholarly pursuits within the group. I used this route for my 2015 visits, after my initial 2013 encounter. Additionally, I had significant interface with the group between 2013 and 2015 through my efforts as publishing editor for the English translation of PAH activists Ada Colau and Adria Alemany's book *Mortgaged Lives* (2014), translated by media artist Michelle Teran.

This chapter is not a complete history of the PAH and provides no detail on its ongoing internal developments, conflicts and challenges. It represents a slice in time and only anecdotally accounts for the group's origins and ongoing developments. Social movement organizations throughout history have had dynamic periods and eras where they have seemed less relevant. This is not to suggest that in seemingly less relevant eras, nothing of import happens. Rather, the focus on the PAH coincided with the author's period of research; at the time of fieldwork, it appeared as a group that faced challenges with a response that warranted a general hope. The focus on the Barcelona PAH is not to suggest that the group has and will continue to develop along the lines suggested within this chapter.

### **1 Meaningful thought**

The following sections provide a theoretical background to this chapter's description of the PAH. The initial section (1.a) succinctly summarizes the PAH's notable response to governmental failure; this summary is of critical importance to the study's concern about

climate change. Then, based on a discussion of concepts related to the general intellect, the next section (1.b) theoretically explains why social leadership that exceeds governance matters, as demonstrated by the PAH. Virno's refinement of the concept of the general intellect serves to conceptualize the PAH's capacity for developing innovative concepts. The next section (1.c) introduces a slight variation of Virno's conceptualization of innovation through a discussion of Spinoza's conceptualization of common becoming as it grounds the PAH's social currency.

### **1a Innovation against dispossession**

Since the start of the 2008 financial crisis within Spain, suicide has been the leading non-health-related cause of death.<sup>197</sup> Studies demonstrate that areas threatened with bankruptcy and home eviction have high rates of depression<sup>198</sup> and suicide.<sup>199</sup> Suicide and depression can be understood as a severe way that crisis is made sensible, that is, they represent the dramatic sensation of the crisis' personalized effects. Due to its finality, suicide appears as an ultimate consequence of crisis. Other studies demonstrate the negative reverberations of the crisis on social reproduction – on childcare, education and family life – emerging from the threat of eviction.<sup>200</sup> PAH activists imply that eviction causes a process of social death and has many knock-on effects within family and community life.<sup>201</sup> In response, as social scientist Pradel-Miquel (2016) succinctly

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197 According to Spain's National Statistics Agency, suicide rates jumped 20% since the start of the crisis and it continues at a heightened rate. There were almost twice as many deaths from suicide as from auto accidents, which is the second highest cause of non-disease related death per year. In 2014, the latest year for which data is available, there were almost 4,000 suicides reported. (*Fonseca* 2016)

198 It has been reported that in 2012, 34% of all suicides were by people affected by the housing crisis. (*Alerta Digital* 2013)

199 Mari-Dell'Olmo et. al. (2016) demonstrates the high prevalence of depression and suicide attempts by those who are displaced by the mortgage crisis.

200 A study completed by the Barcelona based Observatory of Economic, Social and Cultural rights and the PAH documents the impacts on family and child health and well-being, including schooling and care issues as a result of housing instability. (*Observatorio DESC* 2015)

201 "The anxiety felt before an impending eviction and the financial death of families causes severe psychological disorders, which on occasion result in, among others, violent episodes,

describes, “One of the first and main tasks of the PAH was to provide psychological support to victims, showing that they are not responsible for their situation.” (15) This active and affective shifting of the narrative is central to what makes the PAH noteworthy.

Spain’s national economic policy was, for decades, based upon home construction. Its constitutionally guaranteed right to housing<sup>202</sup> became justification for channeling people into home ownership.<sup>203</sup> By 2006, 84 percent of the population was registered as homeowners. (García-Lamarca & Kaika 2016, Vásquez-Vera et. al. 2016) When the mortgage-lending banks were bailed out in response to their failure in the economic turmoil of 2008, the people who had given the state’s financial distress through the structurally predictable crisis received no equal relief. Banks were bailed out, but not the people. Depression and the threats of homelessness are both related as sensible effects of this governmental failure. The PAH’s response to the situation is anchored in a recognition that depression is structurally produced, with governmental dispossession at its systemic root. Their ongoing diagnosis of governmental failure within the social terrain gives the PAH membership grounds for social innovation. The PAH respond<sup>204</sup>

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alcoholism, child neglect, family tensions, increase in domestic violence and suicide attempts.” (Colau & Alemany 2014 33)

202 Article 47 of the Spanish Constitution of 1978 states: “All Spaniards have the right to enjoy decent and adequate housing. The public authorities shall promote the necessary conditions and establish appropriate standards in order to make this right effective, regulating land use in accordance with the general interest in order to prevent speculation. The community shall have a share in the benefits accruing from the town-planning policies of public bodies.”

Spain’s economic policy forwarded home construction and home ownership and the neglect of rental property and created a situation such that, in 2006, the average young home owner was paying 67 percent of their income towards housing costs with the average in Barcelona at 79.5 percent. (*20 Minutos* 2006)

203 See García-Lamarca & Kaika (2016) on the biopolitical project of homeownership by the Spanish government.

204 Besides other activities that will shortly be described, the PAH maintains a website that lists the names of people in Spain who’ve killed themselves in the face of the eviction process. [http://15mpedia.org/wiki/Lista\\_de\\_suicidios\\_relacionados\\_con\\_desahucios](http://15mpedia.org/wiki/Lista_de_suicidios_relacionados_con_desahucios)



differently to the loading of public debt on private individuals that the government psychosocially mandated through ruling dispositifs. Spain's government assumed that through their victim's dispossession, dejection and poverty, common sense would identify the poor as socially dispensable.<sup>205</sup> The PAH overturns the Malthusian logic whereby poverty is proof and justification for dispensability. Dispossession and the PAH's response connects the group to situations imminent to climate change. With flooding, famine, and general social strife, many people will suffer in relatable ways. This chapter's descriptive analysis demonstrates how and in what ways the PAH are noteworthy for this cultural policy.

### **1b Informal social leadership and the general intellect**

In light of their innovative approach to crisis, the PAH brings people together. It brings people, affected by mortgages, together – as if they were gathering around a table in a manner that resonates with Hannah Arendt's (1998) suggestion: “To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it; the world, like every in-between, relates and separates men at the same time.” (52) The people that the PAH gathers meet in a space not fully equivalent with the broader natural world. Rather, those who gather are not concerned about what is nature and what is culture; they gather – just like most people – in a space defined in relation to nature, but intended by humans to address human need. Arendt sees that different natures and activities within the common world act to separate people simply as individuals. For Arendt, the table represents the general public sphere – and what for her stands against the dehumanizing generality is the particular nature of every human individual.

In contrast to Arendt's general public, the lexicon of social science identifies the PAH's milieu as the informal sphere.<sup>206</sup> Pradel-Miquel (2017) characterizes the informal sector

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205 The term “victims” is embraced by the PAH. PAH members who have been affected by the housing crisis call themselves “victims”.

206 Formal and informal modes of governance operate in varied ethical and modal relation between strictly legal and strictly social relational modes. For more on the informal, see Scott

that the PAH operates within through its ambivalence to formal law. That ambivalence, in its own right, acts as a common regulatory and redistributive force at the limits of governmental reach. Both Pradel-Miquel and anthropologist James Scott (1998) describe informal governance as fulfilling distributive needs through cultural practices that operate over cultural scales and across time, rather than through methods formalized by law.

Arendt and Pradel-Miquel provide interesting ways to think about what is happening in the PAH. Arendt's table allows us to recognize their simply human manner of reorganizing relationality towards change. Pradel-Miquel's methodology and lexicon demonstrate how social performance and public personae, without active attention to individual politics, can generally compose meaningful activity regardless of formal governance. But the identification of PAH's members as either abstractly performing social bodies or uniquely unclassifiable individuals overlooks the particular socio-political constellation that the PAH as any group of individuals collectively constitutes. PAH members are historically situated people whose active social being makes them of general interest. Framing them as individual actors with redistributive capacities doesn't define the compositional element particular to their sphere. It affirms that throughout history some people have acceded to change but fails to capture how the PAH might be understood to be moving towards something distinct from the tender horizon of Western political metaphysics. Western metaphysics are ultimately anchored, as the reader will remember from last chapter's discussion of Wynter and da Silva, in the financialized accounting of racially oriented Western power. So, while Arendt (1998) recognizes that anybody, as a representative of the human species, is capable of sitting at a table to negotiate new deals, as Virno (2004) says, her idealism does not frame "the structural characteristics of political activity" (54) of what is entailed in a grounded reworking of the basically *political* that Arendt, via Aristotle, names *activity*.

In relation to developing meaningful innovation within politics today, Virno looks towards the particular structural characteristics of the political defined by post-Fordist relations. Post-Fordism centers the dispossessive capacities of capitalism in between the

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(1989), Fairbanks (2011), and Pradel-Miquel (2016).

informational and organizational capacities of labor and the appearance of potential resources. So, this juncture between actual laboring conditions and the possible social organization of labor, resources and politics is the definitional space within which one can describe the active space of the general intellect. Virno highlights the general intellect as the zone where the liberatory tools of today's multitude are generated, as well as the realm from within which innovation is capitalized. Within post-Fordism, it is said that innovation can be removed from pre-existing contingencies and valued as an abstract thing in itself. To work with the general intellect means to dialogically funnel *whatever* apparent knowledge, sensibility or thought into any given social context to see what can be made with their mixture. The many ways in which the PAH works with the general intellect are notated throughout the second and third sections of the chapter: through dialogical processes of figuring out how to squat a building, for example. The PAH's history of innovative organizing is a result of an ongoing composition of people sitting around and reflecting on their own and others' situations, and also upon all available knowledges, in order to work out proper courses for action. Simply put, this process is one of activist labor within the social field these activists are able to organize.

Virno follows Arendt and Aristotle's general definition of labor, naming it the quotidian and foreseeable exchange with nature.<sup>207</sup> Note that this definition exceeds a Marxian lexicon that might limit labor's definition to having a variable contingency with capital. By working with both Arendt and Aristotle, Virno recognizes the transhistoric need for humans, however socially organized, to enter into exchange with the world for general socially reproductive needs, and other things. Post-Fordist economies strive to capitalize these relationships, too. Virno's multitude's political nature distinguishes itself from Arendt's anthropologically human in the very particular ways that Post-Fordist power relations illuminate labor's (as the general capacity of the human to exchange with the world) general social discursivity, understood as its generally intellectual capacity to work actually particular social relations. Arendt, according to Virno, proposes abstract and possible governmental relations through *whatever* towards a meaningful common

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207 "Labor is the organic exchange with nature, the production of new objects, a repetitive and foreseeable process." (Virno 2004 50)

horizon without attention to the existing political.

The general intellect focuses social innovation based upon thinking through what the social can organize with the things that are known in the place, rather than as a contemplative general capacity (as what occurs at Arendt's table) for action.<sup>208</sup> Pradel-Miquel's and Scott's "informal" or "non-state" can name a relational terrain where meaningful cultural activity might occur, but lacks political utility when failing to describe what might meaningfully produce the genuine political difference that Wynter and da Silva point towards.

For Virno's multitude, the general intellect<sup>209</sup> shines a light upon the total relational scope of what the human experience can constitute through labor. Virno suggests a particular relation between the general intellect and Debord's spectacle: "The spectacle, according to Debord, reveals what women and men can do." (60) Where human communication becomes a commodity in spectacle, the general intellect can be understood as the realm of possibility – the general thought-space that speculates on and through human thought, performance and activity. The general intellect can grimly frame what can be composed by slavery, pay, brutality, mass-dispossession or in nihilism; equally it can optimistically recognize the common human organizational capacity for brilliance and grace and the fact that, regardless of pain, humans have demonstrated a lot of capacity to do great work. Humans have acceded, in many ways, to change. This is why Virno holds out for the general intellect to identify common social way forward in particular ways, for he sees it as idealizing human potential through *whatever* form it decides upon. For Virno, the contemporary political threading of the needle is to organize plausible human projects

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208 This argument traces a critique that Virno makes of Arendt's understanding of the meaning of contemporary capitalist/labor relations. (51–55)

209 The general intellect, a concept originally discussed within Marx's well known "Fragments on the Machine" section of the *Grundrisse*, is an "automatic system of machinery" (1992 692) and the "*organs of the human brain, created by the human hand; the power of knowledge, objectified.*" (706) Virno (2007 4), whose work has greatly refined the concept, suggests the general intellect is Marx's response to Rousseau's concept of a *volonté générale* [general will], or the concept of *nous poitikos* [the active mind, a mind that is actively thinking] that Aristotle expresses in *De Anima*.

through better means. In relation to the post-Fordist elevation of the general intellect Virno asks:

is it possible to split that which today is united, that is, the Intellect (the general intellect) and (wage) Labor, and to unite that which today is divided, that is, Intellect and political Action? Is it possible to move from the “ancient alliance” of Intellect/Labor to a ‘new alliance’ of Intellect/political Action? (68)

The PAH’s innovative leadership composed by and in social dialogue with social relations demonstrates that the labor’s general intellect needn’t bow down before the colonizing ethic of sovereign power or Capital. While surrounded by profit-seeking post-Fordist relations, the PAH seeks to remove social relations from profit. In general, post-Fordist domination of the realm of seemingly free human arrangements makes arrangements seem contingent to a certain fact – that human organization with and for money is the absolute ends and means for total human potential. With money’s governmental insertion between human social relations (like Spain’s monetization of housing relations), Virno recounts the active contradiction that was Hobbes’s *raison d’état* – granting each individual their natural right to act freely. Within Spain’s private debt-driven economy, this created a situation where, “mortgage contracts enrolled not only personal income, but also the practices of everyday life as well as community and family relations as cogwheels into the global speculative financial strategies.” (García-Lamarca & Kaika 2016) By appearing to order society with the policing capacity to enforce its demands, the state steps in between the general human and its own capacities.<sup>210</sup> The generality of the Hobbesian state’s intervention into particular life, besides other ongoing state biopolitics,<sup>211</sup> collaborates to constantly insist that the logics of capitalist necessity are common ones. But the general intellect is general not because of the capacity of the state, but because thought, communication and sociality are general capacities of the multitude.

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210 This ever-growing state intervention is the birth of biopolitics.

211 For example, the management of water resources.

Reading Aristotle's<sup>212</sup> thoughts on governance and leadership beside Virno's general intellect<sup>213</sup> makes surprising connections between innovations and mental health that are arguably central to the PAH's practice. For this study, the question of health relates to how the PAH transforms depression into something political. For Aristotle, the skills of a superior leader are comparable to those of a good doctor. Intended as guidance for leaders, Aristotle wrestles in his *Politics* (1998) with concerns of fairness, justice and what is right in relation to structural governing inequalities contingent to life in general, and in particular to lives within civilization. He grapples, for example, with how Greek society might condemn a good man to a life of slavery.<sup>214</sup> In observing that the status of the slave is socially constructed,<sup>215</sup> he strives to come to terms with the actual social, legal, political and ethical inconsistencies of this fact. Coming to terms with these inconsistencies is important for the construction of social peace – so that master and slave can be friends.<sup>216</sup> He suggests that friendship is only achievable if leadership finds ways to enhance the position of both master and slave. Reading through the facts of the slave society at the founding of Western political philosophy is unsettling. It is a little surprising then to find at this philosophical birth a consideration of the limits and philosophical challenges of human governance rather than a Manichean prescription for legal and political obliteration of the social recognition of difference. Here, political thought is not to strategize control (that Aristotle sees as always as situationally given), to provide order (as in Hobbes) or to be used for the limitless accumulation of individual

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212 Here, looking at Aristotle (2004) *Nichomean Ethic*, (1998) *Politics*, (1986) *De Anima*.

213 Virno spells out some of his debt to Aristotelian thought in Virno (2007), and Virno et al. (2005). William Clare Roberts' (2010) scholarship on this subject is also of great use for this study.

214 "But when people say this, they are in fact distinguishing slavery from freedom, well born from low born, in terms of virtue and vice alone. For they think that good people come from good people." (Aristotle 1998 40)

215 Aristotle is unsure if slavery is a classification appropriate to a natural system, (7) but is certain of its social and thus definitionally variable nomination. (9)

216 "Hence, there is a certain mutual benefit and mutual friendship for such masters and slaves as deserve to be by nature so related. When their relationship is not that way, however, but is based on law, and they have been subjected to force, the opposite holds." (Aristotle 11)

wealth<sup>217</sup> – rather it is to ethically think through the total inconsistencies of the given social orchestra that governance might compose. For Aristotle, the orchestration of the natural form of the city allows for the highest promises of human potential.<sup>218</sup> This city is explicitly understood as something composed of complex relations, incongruously populated and structured upon differently flawed individuals. With proper leadership, the heterogeneous human collectivity can be virtuously led to mutually beneficial ends.

Leadership, Aristotle argues, is primarily needed where law is insufficient to deal with the inconsistencies between what governance has structured and what can be achieved as the greatest good<sup>219</sup> – where neither law nor institution provide real direction. The PAH operates in such a junction of governmental failure, where the banks and state won't solve the seemingly impossible situation they have governed people into. Virno, in describing the discursive nature of leadership, finds in Aristotle an antecedent to the concept of the general intellect. Political philosopher William Clare Roberts (2010) notes that while Virno refers to Aristotle's thoughts on the intellect objectified, he is actually quoting from Aristotle's larger explanation of mindful decision-making. (7) Virno<sup>220</sup> (2005) quotes Aristotle, referring to the general intellect as “the thinking that desires and the desire that thinks” (32) as a way of describing how action-oriented-thought innovates around what it desires to act upon. For Aristotle, this act of choosing what is the greatest good is explicitly akin to how a doctor defines a course of action for a sick patient whose body is still working but whose course must somehow be changed.<sup>221</sup>

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217 “Cases of too much individual accumulation, like that of Midas’, show that one can die of the hunger of greed.” (16–17)

218 See Aristotle. (4–5)

219 “As to the first problem we mentioned, it makes nothing else so evident as that the laws, when correctly established, should be in authority, and that the ruler, whether one or many, should have authority over only those matters on which the LAWS cannot pronounce with precision, because it is not easy to make universal declarations about everything.” (85)

220 Roberts (2010) locates Virno's quotation of Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethic*.

221 Aristotle (1998 18) also makes use of this metaphor to help distinguish between the wealth appropriate to an individual and the wealth appropriate to a community, suggesting that while an individual is concerned with their own health, the doctor is concerned with the overall health and

The PAH's leadership stays with social intelligence in the way that a doctor makes an analysis;<sup>222</sup> treatments for system-imminent problems must be addressed towards that which caused the sickness. The course of treatment can be judged by the virtuosity of the decisions it implied – by whether or not the patient lived, and according to the manner in which they lived. In cases of seemingly individual depression and hardship made manifest by the 2008 financial crisis, the PAH's diagnosis was that individuals were facing a collective illness. The PAH prescribe joy through activism, protest, resistance and collective emotional labor. Roberto Esposito's *Immunitas* (2011) makes a similar though different case for the centrality of medical reasoning within governance. Esposito traces how the concept of "inoculation" can be understood as central to the biopolitical maintenance of power – to meet crisis existing at the edge of law, contemporary governance finds innovative ways to inoculate itself with these outliers. Rather than engage in conflict with outlaw behavior, governance manages risk by incorporating what it can of whatever alterity in order to safely manage its own transformation. The US Government's engagement with the Black Panther Party activities – taking over free lunch programs and sickle-cell anemia research projects while also violently eradicating the Party's core is but one example of such inoculation. This study hopes for other ends for the PAH. Their capacity to socially innovate across race and class via the general intellect, as grounded in immediate social relations, stands as a cure against capitalized

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healthy conditions of the community – and that while individuals can only handle so much wealth, the community can collectively manage it.

Aristotle (2004 103–105) breaks the discursive and cognitive process of decision making down into a tri-fold process that involves perception, intellect and desire. For him, perception is of secondary interest – he states that any animal can perceive. Intellect is an abstract capacity composed of two abilities; the ability to identify all sets of possible needs for actions and the awareness of possible courses of action. For example; possible sets of actions might relate to an understanding of all medicines, courses for actions might come from an appreciation of all the variabilities of disease within individually variable bodies. Aristotle identifies desire as the means by which a proper course of action is navigated – the doctor's prognosis and course of action is based on what they feel to be the most realistic and desirable outcome.

222 "But having grasped only this, someone would be none the wiser; for example, you would not know what sort of treatments to use on your body if someone were to say that you should employ those that medicine requires, and in the way that a medical practitioner employs them." (Aristotle 2004 103)



relations leading to premature social or actual death. It is in this capacity that the PAH demonstrates a political difference with Western governance models.

### **1c Social currency and common sense**

The previous chapter identified Lévi-Strauss's (1962) concepts of how societies maintain order through major "engineering" or minor "bricolaged" variation, contingent to their ongoing systemic needs. As discussed in the previous chapter, Hegelian ontology organizes whatever relational objects to revolutionize the totality of life towards an abstract ideal while maintaining the same governing order. Hegelian universals contribute to societal innovation when, across social difference, individual imagination is collected in the interests of an abstract and real state power. State and banking apparatuses appear to facilitate relations and subsume them by controlling access to money which post-Fordism translates as social capital. From a governing perspective, as Lévi-Strauss's manners suggest, managing social arrangements requires orchestrating activity at a variety of scales.

Nevertheless, the multitude strains at both the limits and definitions of governing concepts; by protesting the self-interest of the class that profits from governing innovations or by just multitudinously misinterpreting the terms of governance. Seemingly below the terms engineered as governing order, the multitude's bricolage of meaning and action can be seen as the common piecing together of life outside of engineered mastery. Spinoza's work on initial common being in his *Ethics* adds, in subtle ways, to how the PAH's innovations continue to find social currency through informal sociality rather than by overarching force of reason, law, money and other determinative logistics. This is the topic of this subsection.

Following Virno's discussion of the one of governmentality and the many of the multitude (2008 41); though the one coincides with the many, the many are not equivalent to it. As PAH member and anthropologist Maka Suarez (2014) makes clear,<sup>223</sup>

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223 The PAH grew significantly with the Spanish Mortgage Crisis, but it is pertinent to restate that the housing movement in Spain has a history and political agenda that precedes the PAH.

the PAH balances tensions<sup>224</sup> between a critique of financial systems and the immediate need of its members for personal and public accommodation. To the extent that it can be said that the PAH works to unfix housing from capital, as multitude the PAH maintains a real ambivalence to governance and what it really seems to provide – that is, it provides both home and homelessness. Yet rather than working to identify solutions that the abstract economic market can bear, the PAH finds solutions through the currency of its own concrete social capacities in the variable but always composed actually existing ecology of social life. The PAH must somehow accommodate its non-market ends with the ongoing realities of state and bank. By the nature of any informal sector, and thus in the nature of the terrain within which the PAH defines its currency, it controls neither bank nor state. And as this chapter will demonstrate (in section 3), the Barcelona PAH has a no-violence policy for its confrontation with the state power – its real organizational power is not based in the multitude’s actual capacity for violence.

The value and force that PAH innovations accrue is social, and has standing against formal power only to the extent that its actually near-criminal behavior is commonly and generally understandable. If innovation was equivalent with and translatable to both the social and to law, Hegelian dialectics would more successfully manage the world. But Hegelian universality seems to fail at translating the fruits of cultural, legal and economic activity across the world into a single basket of coordinated thought that would be the guaranteed order of the Hegelian ideal.<sup>225</sup> According to Marx (1993), the general intellect functions as an “automaton consisting of numerous mechanical and intellectual organs, so

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This is an important point because PAH’s notion of the home is not exhausted in its response to the mortgage bubble. Moreover, it is precisely at the political level that the PAH can benefit in the debate by employing the framework of *Buen Vivir*, particularly with an emphasis on the approach to building a home in harmony with diverse ecosystemic registers. (Suarez 2014 86)

224 Over the course of my research with the Barcelona PAH, they had already begun organizing eviction defenses to support apartment renters as well as homeowners. Moving directly against rentier income was hotly debated within the group, though it was agreed that it was fine for the group to move against large property owners and bank-held rental properties.

225 Mbembe’s (2003) psycho-social critique of Hegelian dialectics – that they’re only accounting is that of deaths, finds a salient echo in the PAH’s counter-proposals concerning the meaning of depression and suicide in the time of economic crisis.

that the workers themselves are cast merely as its conscious linkages.” (692) PAH members work with the PAH as people, common people around a table, not as wage laborers bonded to that table to which they must link in particular ways in order to make the machine function. Elsewhere they may work in such a mechanical manner to earn an income. But in relation to the PAH they work to remove their lives and especially their housing situation from the crushing rules of such accounting. This virtuous ethic of the PAH endears them to the broader informal social sphere who gives them support and is their social currency. If their activity were not endearing, they would lose the social currency they have and with which they make social change.

Among other things, this fact distinguishes the PAH’s social practice from, for example, the general social practices of the “creative economy.”<sup>226</sup> Post-Fordism’s normative creativity pushes subjects to “innovate” their social relations as an abstractable resource. Post-Fordism’s speculative logic asks its subjects to perceive the minutiae of sociality as having qualities that can be autonomously abstractable. So, it would be a mistake to read this chapter’s condensed descriptions of the PAH’s cognitive and affective labor as directly abstractable “innovations” that autonomously drive change. The core of PAH’s work is in its attention to and rejection of the bitter fruits of economization’s brutal dispossession that remain sensible through the informal social field and in the lives of people wherein the PAH finds fluidity. The PAH sees the violence that capitalism enforces, and says to its own social relations that life doesn’t have to be this way. So, in comparison to participants in the creative economy who also socially innovate but with the speculation of profit – under the strict logic of capital, the PAH project is not speculative. Its members have little illusion that they will financially profit from their social activity that commons sociality beside or beyond capital. The PAH’s window for innovation is constricted, members work with fixed but variable issues attendant to the

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226 Here we mean to point towards the expanded field that sits between social practice artwork and networked organizational strategies intended to mobilize participation in institutionally situated projects. By speculative ends, we point to the ambiguity inherent to the realm of abstract production fueled by cultural or real capital, and populated by either truly altruistic or entirely self-interested actors. The vast literature we reference here is descriptive (Holmes 2008, Sholette 2012, Hickey 2012 Thompson 2015) and critical (Berry 2012, Kester 2013, Southwark Notes 2016).

group's given poesis. Though a core group of skilled experienced activists, organizers, artists and graphic designers drives the PAH's ongoing development, they do so in a manner that develops common means and ends and effectively disallows individual profit from collective effort.

Therefore, a less explored aspect of Virno's (2008) alliance of the "General Intellect and political Action" (68), or maybe just another aspect of the general fact of human capacity to think and organize together, may be the fact that intelligence works within already-existing and almost determined fields. "Innovation" may be far more particular and specific than all this attention might suggest. That is, while Hegelian dialectics claim that universal concepts organize the world through well-reasoned action expressed through meaningful cultural production and enlightened politics, perhaps what is proper to the nature of the informal field is that by definition it already exists without having to be organized – and that much formal cultural production is power explaining itself to itself for its interests rather than to the multitude around it. It is important at this point to remember another aspect of the multitude (discussed in Chapter 1); that the multitude is that body which precedes and exceeds any form of governance.

Thus, while Hegel identifies the final ends of the world in a refined and future universality, Spinoza's *Ethics* (2001) recognizes the world as starting in a state of completion and differences that appear over time as just the spooling out, assemblage and disambiguation of different essences of that completeness. Spinoza described God (who is also nature and source of everything) as "being absolutely infinite, that is, a substance consisting of an infinity of attributes, of which each one expresses an eternal and infinite essence."(85) In Spinoza's metaphysics, there are no predetermined ends to nature, just this perfection infinitely appearing over time. In this way, that which multitudinously exists and occurs in context in relation to that *whatever* which power and law expresses is already accounted for by the fact that something else preceded it in order for it to be so. In this way, the sociality of that which multitudinously exists is unaccountable in itself.

A Spinozan understanding of an unknowable common origin suggests that difference

emerges as different faces of God/nature's essential aspects – he names these aspects essences. The fact of a thing's godly and timeless origin is independent from the fact of its actual appearance in the human world – “The essence of things produced by God does not involve existence.” (25) Through different sensitivities to the effects of lawly essences, the multitude contingently brings different relational faces into being.<sup>227</sup> The cause of something actually existing is in something that contingently caused it to be: sociality can organize the momentary appearance of joy as organized logistics can bring a boat to harbor. Thus, with *Ethics*, one can conceptualize how the multitude discursively and actively organizes to bring things from virtual to actual existence in and over time. For Spinoza, knowledge is generated through study of what is sensed through the essential armatures of existence. “There will exist in the human mind an adequate idea of that which is common and proper to the human body: and to any external bodies by which the human body is generally affected.” (77) Awareness of the world is built by affectively bridging understandings of what sensing armatures gather between bodies to form “common notions” of what things are. The broader the common discourse, the wider common sense allows for things to appear or be as they seem they should be.

This discursive process may be somewhat akin to Virno's function of the general intellect. Any difference between Virno's notion of the general intellect and Spinoza's commoning of notions here is contingent to whether the definition of the intellect is informed by a Hegelian or a Spinozan understanding of knowledge. Hegelian-attendant governance rests on the force by which leaders grasp truths that can affect the world, a Spinozan view is aware that the world is already somehow ordered – and that governing truths function only as far as they are commonly or forcefully made functional across what orders difference. The PAH's governmental notions function only as far as they maintain capacity to continually expand throughout the common terrain of life – its innovative generalization of the intellect is that its core activity must also give way to its furthest sensible margins; that its force is based upon the stranger's awareness that the PAH's activity is virtuous. This common understanding is the order it must have for it to

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227 “An individual thing, or a thing which is finite and which has a determinate existence, cannot exist nor be determined to action unless it be determined to existence and action by another cause...” (Spinoza 2001 26)

continue to informally operate.

The following two subsections contain the research and participant-observation notes that aim to capture how the PAH can be seen to embody in form and practice such an innovative mode of political being.

## **2 The PAH- composition of the body**

This second section (2) describes how people encounter and are reoriented within and by their relations within the PAH.

The following statement appears in the PAH's *Green Book* (2015) (a small pamphlet meant to be handed out at any PAH member's first meeting) under the heading *What is the PAH*:

We are all affected by mortgages, the housing policies of the real estate bubble, the mortgage scam and the bad practices of the banking sector, they are the root of today's crisis that has condemned millions of people to unemployment and precarity.

The government today is cutting our basic rights to sanitation and education in order to rescue those who are responsible for the crisis. However, while it is true that all of us are affected, within this manual the term "affected" refers to people who face the difficulty of not being able to pay their mortgage and face foreclosure, as well as those who face the serious violation of the right to housing known as eviction. (6–8)

It often seems that one doesn't easily recognize that one has become victim to systems largely beyond one's control, and how common it is to become such a victim. Rather than recognizing one's fate as an almost systemically preconditioned outcome and hardly one's "own fault", situations of debt and foreclosure often individually close in on those who suffer this fate. Often, the material and psychological effects of foreclosure announcements arrive before any sort of cognition of what is happening to the victim. To

become aware of crisis requires two things: a crisis and a consciousness of it. Systemic crisis arrives regardless of awareness. Moreover, there is no object named “crisis” but rather a series of related effects and orientations that ultimately come to be called “a crisis”. This section describes the process of individual perception, diagnostic recognition, and the understanding that the PAH provides in order for its members to renew their definition of what crisis is, rather than merely accept what governance would like crisis to be.

### **2a Mere acceptance: how it felt in my body**

From the economic perspective, it is simple to name the conditions of dispossession that lead to the Spanish mortgage crisis. Besides being a market failure on paper, the financial crisis of 2007–2008 was real in that it had real reverberations in Spain.<sup>228</sup> Variations within the economy, or within any infrastructure for that matter, affect people. At an abstract remove, one might ask *how*, but when macro-economies that formally manage social relations become unstable,<sup>229</sup> this instability reverberates through social order.<sup>230</sup>

José Coy, founder of the PAH chapter in the city of Murcia, writes about coming to recognize how the market had affected him:

It took time for me to come to the conclusion that I wasn't at fault for having

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228 For the relations between the 2008 crisis and the bursting of the Spanish bubble see Colau & Alemany (2014), and De Weerd and Garcia (2016).

229 “The premise of neoliberal dogmatism is the reduction of social life to the mathematical implications of financial algorithms.” (Berardi 2012 31)

For a particular account of how the Spanish government colluded with Spanish banks to financialize social reproduction through the increased financialization of housing, see García-Lamarca & Kaika (2016).

230 Formal economic scales cut transversally across states, whose stability by law and practice is built from authority by fiat from above, to below. From the body of the state Hobbes writes, “Therefore before the names of Just, and Unjust can have place, there must be some coercive Power, to compel men equally to the performance of their Covenants, by the terror of some punishment, greater than the benefit they expect by the breach of their Covenant.” (1922 110).

By its role as the enforcer of contracts, today the logic of the state atomizes the war of all against all into what the state can manage as individual failure.

stayed unemployed and to arrive at this current feeling of indignation and rebellion. I led a normal life with a small, well paid, self-sustaining business within the textile sector. Globalization destroyed an activity that had been prominent throughout the Mediterranean region. When banks stopped financing the sector, it was the last straw. I spent three years unable to meet my mortgage payments... (2014 18–19)

PAH co-founder Ada Colau, who this chapter will discuss throughout for the important role she has played as PAH spokesperson and also as political entrepreneur, and Adria Alemany, another of the four PAH co-founders write:

Contrary to what one might think, people who come to their first PAH meeting are, more often than angry, morally dejected and resigned. Disoriented, neglected by the administration, threatened by banks and depressed, the foreclosure process acts as a shredder that destroys anything you put in front of it. Families feel guilty for the situation in which they find themselves and attribute it to personal failure. (2014 89–90)

Within PAH meetings, depression and deprivation hover like ghosts that everyone knows will only infrequently appear. One can understand that depression is there – it exists as a thin film of qualitative proof, present as emotional outbursts that occur during meetings. Yet the affirmative effects<sup>231</sup> of mutual aid<sup>232</sup> practiced by the PAH as processes of solidarity and mutual care suffuse the whole project. In addition to more action-oriented meetings, The Barcelona PAH<sup>233</sup> has a weekly calendared conversation for members and a counselor to deal with psychological needs. This meeting is known as the *Grup Ajuda*

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231 For popular press accounts addressing mutual aid's psychological benefits within the Spanish context, see for example Botwin (2016) and Filguera (2014).

232 The concept of mutual aid is a basic element of social life and what is considered anarchist practice and theory. In this regard, it is useful here to remember the strong historic presence of Anarchism throughout Spain, and in Cataluña in particular.

233 Embedded within Valencia PAH meetings are volunteers from the group *Psicólogas y Psicólogos sin Fronteras* [Psychologists Without Borders]. The Madrid PAH has self-organized psychological studies within their own meetings, and has a group for psychological mutual aid that is scheduled to meet every other week.



*Mútua* [Mutual Aid Group], its presence attests to the Barcelona PAH's awareness of the mental health issues inherent to their work.

The American Psychology Association's widely used definition (McIntyre 2001 118) of depression states, "Depression is more than just sadness. People with depression may experience a lack of interest and pleasure in daily activities, significant weight loss or gain, insomnia or excessive sleeping, lack of energy, inability to concentrate, feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt and recurrent thoughts of death or suicide." (American Psychology Association, 2015) "Depression", like any medical definition exists as a term to be accessed in order to analyze it in relationship to the patient's symptoms. An official nomination allows for the doctor to treat a bad or sad mood as something more than normal.

Yet the relationship between a definition in itself and its use as a diagnostic tool is problematic. In an article in the journal *Human Psychopharmacology: Clinical and Experimental*, psychologist Dr. John S. McIntyre (2001) blames the difficulty of making proper diagnoses of depression on a variety of factors including "the persistence of the biomedical rather than the biopsychosocial paradigm of illness and treatment educational issues..." (115) McIntyre goes on to textually analyze the APA guidelines, noting that in its very own words, the APA demonstrates a disconnect between the appearance of an actually existing illness and routes for its appropriate treatment.<sup>234</sup> McIntyre concludes that only by integrating clinical and empirical wisdom into education about the use of guidelines might there be improved diagnosis and treatments for patient situations. (118) This is to suggest that beyond recognizable physical evidence (scars from suicide attempts) or less clear behavioral evidence (changes in long-term behavioral patterns), a caregiver has difficulty truly recognizing depression, and that treatments are far more

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234 "In the introduction of the (APA) guideline there is a 'statement of intent' noting that the guideline is not a standard of medical care. The statement also notes that 'adherence to them [the guidelines] will not insure a successful outcome in every case, nor should they be construed as including all proper methods of care or excluding other acceptable methods of care...' McIntyre (2001) finds such statement in the APA to be helpful in minimizing the potential for misinterpretation or misuse of the guideline.

open than singular solutions might suggest. Mental health is a confluence of mental and social conditions, where depression sits between a possibility for its particular recognition, its perceived causes, and possible treatments. It is culturally and situationally dependent<sup>235</sup> upon any variety of determinations.

Furthermore, the task of analysis is compounded when the individual suffering depression or deprivation is the one who is tasked with recognizing and understanding that they need not be as they are, and that their situation could be different. This self-awareness is not so easy. Yet people who come to the PAH have, to some extent, already sensed that their problem is a common one and not just their burden alone.<sup>236</sup> The PAH, for its part, assumes a mental health aspect to their work. In relation to the overall interest of this thesis: the self-recognition PAH members demonstrate in sensing and analyzing their situation and the actions they take to address the causal conditions mirrors situations this study imagines in relation to the changing climate.

At the weekly Monday night meeting that formally serves as the welcome for new PAH members, one can glimpse the raw emotions that the crisis of foreclosure draws from those who face it. An emerging activist commitment represented by those bodies that enter the Barcelona PAH office in order to differently address their situation can also attest to the fact of the social face of the psychosocial crisis.

“My story is a little different,” says the first woman to explain her housing situation on this night of January 20 2015. Everyone’s case is a little different. Everyone seems to need to express the uniqueness of their situation.

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235 Such studies, endemic to psychology, that link social situations with high prevalence of depression make obvious the sociocultural elements determinant to depression. For studies demonstrating the prevalence of depression among those effected by the Spanish mortgage crisis, see for example Muñoz et. al. (2015), Marí-Dell’Olmo et. al. (2016), and Vásquez-Vera et. al. (2016).

236 The awareness of high incidents of suicide among those threatened by eviction has provided grounds for a chief judge in Spain’s Basque region to make changes to the region’s mortgage and eviction laws. See Barbero (2015).

“My case is particular,” says the fourth speaker before explaining her story. “Good evening, my name is Fatima. Last year, in February I had a problem with my job. So now I only work six hours a week. I couldn’t pay rent from March on. I have 5,000 Euro debt. I will be kicked out of my house on January 26<sup>th</sup>. That’s a week away, next Monday. What can the PAH do for me?”

“We can’t pay your debt,” someone in the audience of 70 people jokingly responds. Entertained, many laugh.

Fatima continues, “They pointed me to social services to help provide me a home. But they gave me a date in February.”

Mark, a long-term PAH activist, says, “Did they show you an eviction notice?”

“Yes.”

“But in Barcelona, if people are going to be kicked out of their apartment, there are emergency flats for you. It’s very important.” Someone is explaining how things are supposed to work and of a particular governmental failure to follow the law. Fatima is not listening; she seems to doubt that anything can be done.

“If you don’t listen, well, you’ll be going from one flat to the next asking for help... We know the situation. You have to act quickly; you have to save yourself, secure your situation. Go back to the judge.”

Fatima repeats. “I want to secure myself. You know the situation. I have to act quickly. I have to save myself. I want to save myself.”

Mark says, “There’s one week. Get social housing and you also need to stop the eviction.”

Fatima, finding reason not to act in her own self-interest suggests, “The building’s in bad condition though.”

Another committed PAH activist name June tells Fatima, “I’ll go with you tomorrow to the court.” Fatima seems shell-shocked, almost unconscious of the fact that she may be losing her house within a week and unable to stop the process by herself. She does not seem to believe that there is anything to do and explains that she has to go to work and has other things to do besides stopping her eviction and imminent homelessness. Yet somehow, she has, along with eleven other people, gone to this PAH meeting for their first time.

Perhaps Fatima heard about the PAH from friends. Perhaps she heard about it on the news. Perhaps she’d passed by one of the PAH’s noisy protests they call *escraches*, where politicians are harassed to no end. Perhaps she saw one of their flyers on the street or one of several hundred flyers wheat-pasted to obscure windows of PAH-occupied or targeted banks. Subsequent subheadings will discuss the way the PAH familiarizes its concepts and behaviors through the general population of the city. But what is important here is that stuff, cast-off from activist practice, has a mediatic effect and helps people find out about the group.

In *Mortgaged Lives*, Colau and Alemany (2014) reflect on how the PAH came to be the lively workshop through which people might transform their material reality. The fact of the PAH’s success contrasts with V de Vivienda, a housing project that preceded the PAH. V de Vivienda was an artistic, activist, and NGO collaboration; Colau and former members of the Las Agencias<sup>237</sup> collective participated along with others. Begun in 2007, V de Vivienda focused on the aspiration of home ownership, the actuality of its individual occurrence and the actual fact that housing is guaranteed within in the Spanish Constitution. As Alemany and Colau observed in 2014, “It’s not that *V de Vivienda* said anything new, but that it said it in another way, renewing the language and the codes used

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<sup>237</sup> I will later discuss how, through the *Enmedio Collective*, these individuals designed graphics for the PAH’s *escraches*.

by more traditional social movements. Without a doubt, one of the principal merits of the movement was its capacity to connect with public opinion through direct, communicative campaigns.” (84)<sup>238</sup> But Colau and Alemany identify a weakness in *V de Vivienda*’s aspirational and communicative strategy saying, “In the case of *V de Vivienda*, the transformation of these young people into social activists was nearly a seamless transition. But were older people affected by the mortgage capable of going beyond their individual cases and getting involved in the political process? Could victims become activists?” (89)

Unlike *V de Vivienda*, the PAH has managed to directly engage people affected by crisis, turning victims into activists. The facts of the crisis and the work that the PAH does to articulate itself as the group actually capable of responding to it attest to this. For example, by the following Monday (January 27<sup>th</sup>), Fatima has managed to postpone her eviction through legal work, by chasing down social services and with the active solidarity of other PAH members joining her at the door of her home on the day of her possible eviction. So, at the following Monday’s welcoming meeting, the facilitator asks, “How many people are coming to a PAH meeting for the first time?” to which seven people raise their hands (a few more victims would arrive by the crowded meeting’s end). The weekly facilitator goes through the routine of recounting the PAH’s story, “The PAH is a group that began to meet in 2009... We don’t want you to lose your house. The key is solidarity, that we support one another in our actions. When you enter for the first time, you learn that you are not alone, and that ‘Sí, se puede!’<sup>239</sup> Today we stopped an eviction. Fatima, could you tell us about it.”

Fatima stands up to applause. “It’s really because of the help of all of you, of June (who’d

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238 Counter-posed to the state’s promise was *V de Vivienda*’s eventual motto, “You’re not going to have a home in your whole fucking life,” which was written during Spain’s growing housing bubble. Spain’s economic policy forwarded home construction and home ownership and the neglect of rental property and created a situation such that in 2006, the average young home owner was paying 67 percent of their income towards housing costs with the average in Barcelona at 79.5 percent. (20 Minutos 2006).

239 “Sí, se puede!” commonly translated as “Yes we can!” is a common activist rallying cry throughout the Spanish-speaking world.

volunteered to join her at court) who made it possible.” Fatima returns to her seat and the facilitator explains the three basic phases of fighting foreclosure and eviction (see Section 3g. Grassroots Policies).

## **2b Joining the PAH**

A simple routine inaugurates affected people into the group. They are invited to attend the Monday meetings, and after presenting themselves, they are asked to listen. At one such meeting in January, one meaning for this process is made explicit in the following exchange between a female meeting facilitator and a new arrival. The facilitator begins the gathering with a routine explanation of her experience with the PAH. “...I was upset, and so I got involved with the PAH. Here is a place where I can let loose my tears, begin to talk realistically about the banks, where we can cry. Here we can begin to talk person-to-person because we all know what we are talking about. We started in 2009; in 2013, we started the popular initiatives to change the laws by gathering 1,500,000 signatures. All we do is fight against this law because it is unjust. The bank has so many empty houses... I am welcome here, I can get empowered and find encouragement here. The banks aren’t interested in my health, with my spirit.” The facilitator’s stirring invocation is met with applause and shouts; “Sí, se puede!”

The new PAH arrival takes this energy in hand and begins to make a speech, talking about the banks and how we must work together to fight the system. At the beginning of her vocal rapture, she is told that through the meeting’s process, “we will get to how we organize...” The new member hushes up as the induction process’s order is explained; that on Mondays new people affected by the crisis are welcomed and oriented. That on Tuesdays there’s a coordination meeting, that on Wednesdays there’s an important meeting for people to discuss the psychological impacts of the crisis, that on Thursday there are groups whose members are victims of particular banks gathering to share bank negotiating tactics. The meeting continues as she takes her seat among the 70 or so other attendees.

The Barcelona PAH does not ask its new members to over-commit to a functioning

internal process they do not yet know. As a group, they take on the banks; rhetorical innovation at this moment is superfluous— collective projects she isn't yet aware of are already organizing to deal with the issues.

During this meeting— where attendees appear to be of Spanish, Asian, and Latin American origin, another new victim, a woman named Claudia states that she is facing an eviction from her rental apartment on the very next day. The line between non-member and member of the PAH is negligible. Overnight, an action to defend her house is organized. To be a member of the PAH is to stand with the PAH and have the PAH stand for you against the banks and their allies in government and elsewhere. Note this interaction, witnessed during this same meeting, where a woman first discusses her potential eviction from a property she'd bought. She has been cutting her food budget so that she can pay off her loan. Susan says, “Ah, there we have it, we are a group of people who can't pay their loans. Tell the banks you're with the PAH and you're getting informed. You can do this...”

Another woman, later on in this meeting, is discussing for the first time her difficulties with the Caixa Bank. “Those assholes” responds a PAH member “Tell them you're related to the PAH and your looking to solve the problem. Tell them you want serious solutions.”

These and other anecdotes talk about the relationship between the PAH and its notion of “membership.” Belonging is both a *fait accompli* and a work in progress. As this chapter will go on to demonstrate, the Barcelona PAH successively works to expand itself in relation to needs they find themselves capable of addressing. But in continued relation to the therapeutic nature of the group's mutual aid, is the *Grup Ajuda Mutua* (mutual aid group in Catalan). Unlike other Barcelona PAH meetings, this one is closed door and without formal agenda. Meeting contents are fluid, driven by what attendees need to talk about: excluding conversations dealing with the bureaucracy of mortgages – there are other meetings for that. The facilitator, an art therapist, defines his therapeutic role as the one who provides focus, understands the meeting as a space to deeply explore

“repercussions at the level of the family, the individual and in work. In the group, we see how all this affects things at the level of health and emotions.”<sup>240</sup> (Callejas & Monroy 2014)

### **2c Mutual aid and social constructionist psychology**

During the January 19<sup>th</sup> welcoming meeting, the coordinator begins by saying, “Thanks to the PAH, I’m going to explain to you how I learned not to be afraid of everything. With the PAH, you don’t rely on the PAH. We learn together what to do to solve our own problems.” How the PAH deals with debt’s affective trauma is woven through the entirety of the project as mutual aid.

I had the opportunity to interview PAH activist and psychologist Irene Montero Gil<sup>241</sup> (January 10, 2015). Gil, together with other mental health workers/PAH members conducted unpublished research on trauma and transformation<sup>242</sup> within the PAH. Though with the Madrid PAH, her thoughts reflect a common current of thought around trauma and therapy throughout Spain.

Gil’s PAH research followed the Social Constructionist school of psychology. Their approach looks at how “psychological phenomenon are themselves socially constructed.” (Billig 1995 65). At its base, Social Constructionists question “the ways in which the very

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240 Out of respect for the closed-door policy, which is a true anomaly for the group, I chose not to attend the meeting.

241 Gil holds a Master’s Degree in educational psychology from the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. At the time of this interview, she was an active member of the Madrid PAH. Now she serves as on the Executive Committee of *Podemos*, the largest of the political parties that came to prominence after the 2008 crisis. She is as congressperson for Madrid to the Spanish the *Cortes Generales* or the national parliament. Within the legislature, she serves as *Podemos*’ speaker.

242 Along with Gil’s unpublished study is another one conducted by an embedded researchers in the Barcelona PAH that looks at individual empowerment in relation to the PAH, Casellas, Antónia & Sala (2017).

See Botija (2015) for a wider analysis of the relations social inequality and mental health in Madrid, which includes a chapter discussing the non-medical and non-clinical social setting of the PAH as effective treatment for mental health issues.



nature of our knowledge-producing practices and institutions entrap us, and lead into simply reproducing unchanged what in fact we thought we were reconstructing.” (Parker & Shotter 1990 1) As such, Gil’s comments about the PAH demonstrate the ways in which she imagines its processes ontologically reorganize the sensibility of trauma and social relation in some manner equivalent to Constructivist goals.

Gil explains that before engaging with the PAH, mortgage victims share their crisis with friends and family. This ad hoc sharing draws in a community in ways neither affirmative nor productive— though it does displace stress to friends and family. To the extent that they are involved, state and aid organizations like CARITAS<sup>243</sup> act as other outsourced and inappropriate stress-bearers of the debt— inappropriate because their interests are not consonant with those affected by the crisis. However, Gil explains, once a person joins the PAH, they learn how to accept their own responsibility for the debt situation while also recognizing the responsibility that others, including the banks and the state, have in creating and facilitating the situation that collaborated in their becoming victims. Central to this PAH facilitated re-orientation is an understanding that banks, with the state as accomplice, have cheated people. “People can’t believe that a bank would cheat so many people,” Gil says.

For Gil, trauma is not simply erased through participation with the PAH, rather, trauma becomes something understandable and identifiable. Trauma can become a manageable form; it can become something like “a stone in a bag.” The bad feelings and the fact of debt becomes something comprehensible; it becomes just one fact of fate among other things that have happened over the course of many individuals’ lives. The PAH rapidly transforms<sup>244</sup> people by providing new frames through which to process trauma and its causes. In the PAH, she says:

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243 CARITAS is the preeminent charity organization in Spain. It is associated with the Catholic Church.

244 The speed by which the PAH is said to transform member’s lives varies. Some people say it takes five meetings. Others say what happens in five meetings can be accomplished in one protest, “when you go out to the street screaming...when you leave, you go, ‘whoa!’” (*Psicólogos y Psicólogos sin Fronteras* 2016)

I can cry, I can talk about it however I want. Facing evictions and going through evictions becomes a therapeutic process. I can scream, I can skip over and jump through a variety of emotions, I can overcome crisis. Hug, scream, laugh. Some people can't cry – others just want to serve others who are there to defend their home. People out themselves for who they are and what they need in these situations. There are also affirmative changes in the eventual reflection in the aftermath of the eviction process.

The PAH's process demonstrates the "emotional intelligence of the collective." Gil thinks that one's experience in the PAH is "not like individually holding a stone." It is a process of being commonly held and holding stones of debt together. Here Gil cites liberation theologian and psychologist Ignacio Martin Baro. Baro's work found operative truths in the blurry lines between the individual and the social construction of reality in the context of El Salvador before he was famously murdered along with other activist priests. (Pavón-Cuéllar & Equihua 2013 643) Baro, according to Gil, understood that social process, not therapy, solves individual problems. Accordingly, Gil and others do not see the PAH as an organization explicitly concerned with psychology or therapy. She sees it as an organization that is aimed at stopping bad laws and defending the human right to housing. The PAH is more "psychosocial than psychological. It's not really a personal process."

Like others, Gil sees the PAH as neither identitarian nor ideological. Rather, she sees it as a group simply based on the human need for housing. In context, the political ways it articulates for the stone of debt to be carried is different from previous Spanish political articulations in a historically particular way. Since the end of the Franco dictatorship, Spain's politics have been divided between Conservatives (the *Partido Popular*) and Socialists (*Partido Socialista Obrero Español*). After the Generalissimo's death in 1975, the transition to democracy is understood by many to have occurred as a negotiated detente between these two organized political factions at the expense of other social compositions.<sup>245</sup> Rather than a thorough transformation of all of Spanish society, many

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245 This narrative is a common one among people I interviewed, and also appears in Spanish

see the so-called post-Franco Democratic Transition as the normalization of a divide between governing and governed. The transition was staged as the legal recognition that though politics might include many, they must work through either the Socialists or Conservative. According to Gil, less radical social movement utilize the ideological and identitarian tools of these parties; one innovation that allows the PAH to be understood within Spain as non-ideological (neither left nor right) is that it resists utilizing either party's rhetorical and ideological devices. Rather than echoing tropes that align with extant formal governance, the PAH's so-called informality is expressed through the fact that it demonstrates care for the general human that is left unattended by either party over the course of the crisis.

According to Gil, by this general nature the PAH avoided becoming a node of routine political identity formation. "You can continue with your own identity, but carry the PAH beside you as a way to deal with the pain of debt."

## **2d The body of people**

The people affected by the Spanish Mortgage Crisis are simply people. This tautology functions because it appears as an operative truth of the PAH. They are people with needs common to people, who have been affected by a particular crisis. In what following sections (2d and 2e) we discuss the humanness of the PAH as 'dignity,' and how the notion is articulated through its groups of individuals. First, we briefly explain the subjective nature of the dignified person, to clarify conceptual ways of relating to them. Then we demonstrate this dignified body by explaining what dignity means to the PAH, and by explaining formal characteristics of the Barcelona PAH and how it organizes itself with dignity in mind.

In this first instance, we refer to those affected by the crisis as people, in the word's most common usage. They are not Virno's (2004, 2008) 'people' who stand against the multitude through the Hobbesian intervention of sovereignty granted, rather, they're people with needs, both social and biological. By recognizing that human social needs are

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history books; see for example (Carr 1980).

as important and mobile as their biological needs, we recognize that despite their dispossession, these people are not Agamben's (1998) *homo sacer*, for we do not encounter *them* through an abstract and managerial lens of the state that would simply exclude them. In the first instance, they are just individuals, who came together before we were able to classify them. And by recognizing the fact of the inseparability of the biological and social, they are also not the genealogical or autological individuals that Elizabeth Povinelli (2006) describes- they are neither selves whose identity has been endowed by familial and cultural inheritances (as genealogical) or via the more contemporary autological processes of social self-definition. Rather, they are just people.

In the first instance, we encounter these particular people, affected by the always-varying world (whose variability could be called 'a crisis' or just a change in weather) as fellow humans: by this shared particularity alone we have something in common. "To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common" (Arendt 1998, 52.) We encounter people, like those in the PAH, as those with whom we have the world in common. The Platform for People Affected by the Mortgage Crisis creates a table like the one Arendt describes. Agamben and Povinelli define their people by instruments, Agamben here through the lens of governance; and Povinelli through the modes of cultural transference. Rather, common people here multitudinously relate to each other as human do; and by actually relating to one another in a focused way, things happen.

## **2e Dignity and the disobedience**

On January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015, I attended a workshop announced on the Barcelona PAH website in the Catalan language as *Desobediència Civil i Lei Mordassa* [Civil Disobedience and the Gag Law]. The workshop was a civil disobedience training for a planned 11<sup>th</sup> of February occupation of a *CaixaBank* office (one of Spain's largest banks). In particular, the occupation was also in dialog with the Lei Mordassa, the new bill making its way through the Spanish government meant to severely limit political speech<sup>246</sup>. The civil

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246 See for example, the Guardian, December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014. *Spain's New Security Law Sparks Protests Across Country*.

disobedience itself was planned for *Caixa* offices on *Ramblas de Catalunya*. The *CaixaBank* had been bailed out by the Spanish Government in 2008 in order to stem the banking crisis; despite the influx of public cash, the PAH understands that *Caixa* and other banks do not recognize any social responsibility arising from the public bailout. Instead of sharing the forgiveness that the government gave them, they remain punitive towards individual debtors. *Caixa* in particular is notoriously difficult to negotiate with.

The action and planned bank occupation was to be a part of an international day of action against *Caixa Catalunya* and Blackstone Group (a private equity and investment bank). The occupation would have two goals, to further pressure *Caixa* to settle or forgive mortgage debts and to focus attention on how they had sold off the mortgages of large rental properties to the US owned Blackstone. As bad mortgages have worked their way through the system since the beginning of the crisis, the PAH has begun working with an increasing number of rental properties in addition to troubled owner-occupied situations. Renters whose apartments had been sold by *Caixa* to Blackstone were promised that their rents would not rise. Nevertheless, Blackstone was increasing rents and making renewed threats of eviction to those in arrears. (Europa Press 2015, PAH 2015b)

For the civil disobedience workshop, the PAH's office floors were cleared of chairs. There was a participatory exercise happening when I arrived. Two groups of people facing each other, speaking loudly and gesticulating. A facilitator was standing on a chair in front of both groups. I should also note before I continue, that every PAH meeting has at least one facilitator. Facilitators volunteer from what amounts to a self-generating pool of PAH activists who've spent enough time in the group to understand and master the position's expectations, processes and rhetorics. So, for example, the volunteering to facilitate Monday and Tuesday meetings occurs publicly at the previous week's Tuesday Assembly. Following the model of autonomous affinity groups, decisions for groups other than these two meetings are made through the autonomous group's own processes.

So, at this meeting, the disobedience training facilitator was trying to institute an order to the conversation by suggesting that both groups listen to the speaker that she'd passed a

soda bottle to. Each chosen speaker playfully spoke into the bottle as if it were a microphone. Often, people would listen, though often enough it was also playfully loud and chatty. Based on previous civil disobedience trainings I'd attended, I'd expected to see half the group limp on the floor with arms linked while the other half played police. Instead what I encountered was a vivid collective articulation of the group's current self-image. It was also a conversation about dignity.

That the PAH was essentially dignified was unquestionable. Embodying dignity is a central achievement of the PAH, "It dismantles the stigma associated with the threat of eviction for thousands of people who felt completely isolated and has turned what consumer society considered a personal failure (something to be ashamed of) into dignity and solidarity." (Colau & Alemany 2014, 126) Within meetings, individuals refer to politicians, police and bankers as thieves, liars, cheats, assholes, sons of bitches. The PAH understands the banks' actions as theft, facilitated by governmental and professional corruption that allows them to pressure and cheat people into making bad decisions. The PAH literally uses the word cheating ("estafa") as a synonym for the word "bank loan." Spanish law is often described as being wrapped up with the banks, profit and capital. In discussion, it is often only a breath away that there is no profit with the banks, only theft. Regarding a mortgage case discussed at a Monday meeting, I heard a PAH member say, "No lawyer is going to solve this. Lawyers will laugh at you because the law doesn't support you, that is what the PAH does. They would have people prostitute themselves in order to pay a rent or loan. They would have people choose hunger in order to pay back loans."<sup>247</sup> Conversely, The PAH's advice to anyone facing eviction is that if one cannot pay, one should not pay. Food, medicine, these and other costs come before paying off the banks. Taking care of oneself and one's family is dignified; prioritizing the banks and their strong arms by the law is to accept their practice of theft and corruption contingent to being made victim of them.

The purpose and subject of debate at this disobedience training was to identify which tactics of civil disobedience might be considered violent and thus below the group's

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<sup>247</sup> June, PAH Assembly, January 27 2015.

dignity. “We are dignified. It is they that have no dignity. If it were up to them, they would kick us out of our houses and let us live in boxes on the side of Montjuïc” an older man explained. This was one response to the question of whether or not it’s violent to curse at the police. About fifty people were participating, smiling and joking and appreciating the responses each was giving to the facilitator’s set of question. “There’s a difference between calling a policeman a thief and a son of a bitch” explains a middle-aged woman. “The difference of course is that I don’t know if he’s a son of a bitch, that’s personal. But he’s acts like a thief when he robs me of my home.”

A third person, a man dressed in beaten clothes says, “No, I agree, I wouldn’t call him a son of a bitch. But then again, if in a person-to-person argument, I might call him that in order to make a point.”

“Is it violent to disturb a bank employee’s working area?” asks the facilitator. She is listing a variety of scenarios the members of the bank occupation might find themselves in during the action. In response to each question, groups form to her left or right, with the space in-between each group as a manifest spectrum of opinion.

“We are more dignified than they. They are less dignified than us. They have dignity as individuals but not as bank employees. My point of view is that to stop someone from working is not violence. It doesn’t hurt anyone but the bank. Making a mess of the office isn’t hurting anyone,” says one woman.

A male activist whose day job is as a computer engineer states, “Paper is a tool of eviction. Its super activist to use it, to empty employees’ desks of it and throw it all around.” Another woman who often does organizational work for the PAH says, “It stops things and makes it difficult to work.” A second woman disagrees, “Our actions are public. We have to behave.” An older man who joined the PAH to work towards the cancellation of his daughter’s debt says, “It might be violent, but saying it is violent is different from saying I’m not going to do it.”

Working through this training, those present expound upon the socially complex task of the bank occupation – the scenario they will individually find themselves in. The conversation negotiates manifest individual ethics, collective desires and tactics that individuals and the group have the capacity to contextually employ. The goal is to produce a set of behavioral agreements through the training’s dialogical approach. Agreements– the training aims to come up with action guidelines. Action guidelines are time-based and flexible. The facilitator explains, “We are engaging in debates. It’s important to make a protocol of actions, but it’s important to go in to the action with the knowledge of what we’ve agreed upon means. When we employ specific acts in protest, it’s a form of negotiating. When we’re making actions, we also have press, police, and the public present. We don’t want to insult or injure people. Remember, they are employees. I don’t think I want to throw papers in their faces, but it’s an established way we do things, throwing papers and making a mess of the files. This is the line of negotiation we are discussing now.”

An older male who I’d never seen before but had clearly had been involved with the PAH for some time said “We did many things including emptying garbage cans and scattering the trash around the floors of banks three years ago. We did everything– excuse my language, if we’d found shit, we’d have thrown it in the offices too. Sometimes you need to scream.”

To this, the facilitator responds, “If you have a little power, you’re going to be criminalized. Gandhi said that violence is always unacceptable, but its use might be strategic. Our *escraches* weren’t violent, but they didn’t work. People didn’t speak well of us, so we don’t use them now.”

A middle-aged woman, Susan, speaks up. “No, it wasn’t like that; it was a way to turn up the heat. The PAH can do *escraches* again. We can do *escraches* with Rajoy (Spain’s Prime Minister) for our legislative initiatives. We can do loud *escraches* or silent ones.”

The facilitator responds, “Now we are bigger, we don’t need to think of such radical



actions. We need to decide in common what actions we are going to take. If we say no together, it means no.” Though she is the facilitator, she did not take authority and insist that her narrative dominate and become the agreement. Rather, she clarifies that those present for the training would act together based on the current composition of the Barcelona PAH, not its past identity.

## **2f The PAH’s Logo as recognizable form**

Few things are as concretely identifiable to the PAH as its logo. With the logo, the PAH is nationally recognized. Marta Abad designed its, choosing fonts and color scheme.

Though she initially designed it for PAH Barcelona, it is used throughout the 200 odd PAH chapters in Spain, and internationally. Abad made a stylebook for this purpose. As each PAH chapter is autonomously organized, each chapter needn’t adopt the logo.

Nevertheless, most choose to use it with some adjustment – mostly just swapping out the name “Barcelona” for their city. Across difference, the logo remains a standing representative of the group. Because the PAH has staged a transversal space since its 2009 founding, many sensibilities have flown through it, providing it relational grist for organizational transition and transformation. One notable transition has been that the PAH’s most charismatic spokesperson, Ada Colau has stepped down from her post to help co-found a political party.<sup>248</sup> Therefore, few things remain as recognizable to the PAH than the formal design choices made by this designer.

Abad is a professional whose other clients include a Barcelona-based contemporary dance festival, a family theatre and an art residency program. Her work for these arts organizations have the graphic sophistication that one would expect of such clientele; design collaborations with these groups have resulted in works with subtle color relations, intricate patterning, asymmetrical balance and intelligent font choice.

I met Abad at an evening design salon attended by academics and professional designers. We began chatting in the company of someone she later described as one of Spain’s

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<sup>248</sup> Colau co-founded *Barcelona en Comú* and is now serving as the city’s mayor.

leading font historians. The expert described Abad's use of Helvetica for the PAH logo as "ironic" in that such a radical group as the PAH is obviously not the normative institutional player that the font might suggest. Afterwards and outside his company, Abad respectfully disagreed, saying that she did not think its use was at all ironic. She sees the PAH as fulfilling the solid yet optimistic openness that this International Style font ultimately suggests to many.<sup>249</sup>

Nevertheless, what I appreciate about the logo is its blandness in light of the PAH's performance of political radicalism. The calm image has been reproduced innumerable times, laid out and photocopied on flyers to be sloppily wheat-pasted on bank walls. It has littered bank floor throughout the country after PAH activists have dumped both flyers and banker's trash bins.

Abad acknowledges the logo's blandness, saying, "I don't believe in anti-, I'm not anti-. I feel ok. I have a lot of work to do, so I don't need to be bothered with so many things. I don't need to say, 'I'm a lesbian.' I don't need the drama. I don't need to dress in a way that screams my identity. I'm here and I'm happy with myself, that's it."

In discussing her primary color choices for the logo, she says, "I chose fluorescent green for the logo to be visible. I wanted green for hope. I didn't want red, for violence, for 'stop'. I didn't want any violence in it, I wanted the color to be cheerful, to be visible, to have hope."

Abad was asked to design for the PAH by one of the group's four founders, Lucia Delgado. Delgado and Abad grew up together near the seashore and again lived near each other in Barcelona at the time of the group's founding. Abad got involved in the PAH to support her friend's work and in appreciation of the group's goals:

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249 "Helvetica is a time-tested, reliable choice for designers, it was released in the 1950s and today is used so much that people don't even know what to call it. It has, in essence, become nameless." (Haley et. al. 2012: 176)

"Standard and Helvetica played their part in some of the most durable corporate design, such as Paul Rand's for IBM." (Hollis 2006 253)



PAH logo designed by Marta Abad.

When I did the design, I considered how to help over a long period of time, without feeling exhausted. I wanted to design something that said, ‘you don’t need to put all your life here, you don’t need to feel obliged. I learned that they are a group of people who help a lot. I know they began in a small place, but that they were very skilled and experienced organizers. They run things very well, very smoothly with a good process. I learned how to run my own meetings because of them, now I say, ‘go to a PAH meeting to learn how to make meetings.’ PAH meetings are a time to share nice things, to gain balance and to chat. In the school of the PAH, I learned a lot of things. I learn that there are important things, relationships. Relationships with my mom and dad, with my friends. If I’m out of balance, it’s clear that these relationships aren’t healthy.

When asked what sort of institution she thought the PAH ultimately was, she described it as a school. “They say that education makes you free. I appreciate the emotional learning of the PAH, the way they help each other. They try to help each other outside of money. It’s an education in creating and supporting healthy relationships. “

## **2g An Office and a guidebook**

In addition to doing the logo and stylebook, Abad designed the PAH's guidebook. Its 2015 version is a small thing, date-book-sized and fifty pages when counting the book’s green front and back covers. Inside is a description of the group:

*The Platform for People Affected by Mortgages (PAH)* was born in Barcelona in February 2009 with the intention of providing a citizen response for the situation of those affected... Almost 5 years later, we can say that today the PAH is a nonpartisan citizen’s movement, articulated in more than 190 nodes throughout the country, where persons who are directly affected by the crisis and those in solidarity with them can organize together to renounce and change this situation. The PAH acts in many terrains (emotional, political, mediatic, judicial, communicative, etcetera...) in order to make legal changes which provide responses to the infringement of the fundamental rights that those affected suffer from, and more broadly they provide solutions to actualize the right to housing for

the entire population. (PAH 2015 5)

The book outlines the three phases of the eviction process and what the PAH suggests doing in each phase (detailed in section 3g). It is a useful book— informative, simple and beautiful. It expresses in a different form much of the knowledge one would hear at weekly meetings. It's free, though during some meetings, members suggest making a donation in exchange. The title of the handbook is *The PAH's Green Book*. I asked Marta about the title. "We knew we needed a title, and I kept open the opportunity for a title to arrive. None came so we stayed with what I'd put in to fill the space, the *Green Book*. I liked it. Let's keep it simple I thought. Let's say what it is."

The Barcelona PAH's storefront office is down the street from *Plaza de España*. It's just a 10-minute walk from the metro stop, you can take the green line, the blue line or the red line (lines 1, 3 or 8) to get there. One leaves the train, exits the station by way of the steps or the escalator and enters into the visually arresting Plaza. The Plaza de España was developed for the 1929 *Barcelona International Exposition*. Because the plaza is a place where so many roads intersect, one might not stay long but rather head straight away along one of the busy sidewalks towards the PAH office. Route depending, one passes a grand hotel, government offices or a trade-fair ground built within a converted bullring. The street-side economy flattens out into an area of cheaper restaurants, office supply stores, bars and small produce markets. The PAH office itself is off of the main road, on a parallel street whose varieties of architecture seems to attest to a boom to bust cycle of growth.

The PAH office is on the west side of the street, and if the roll-up gate is down, one would see Abad's PAH logo painted on its metal surface. When open, which is most evenings, the front wall is revealed to be all of glass. One might think it'd have a double swing door because from the outside the interior looks like a converted garage, though it's not. It's a single door on a hinge. The floor within is concrete. The place is not too bare, the ceiling has skylights so therefore the space has a warm effect. The walls are mostly bare brick or cinderblock but for marker and corkboards and the three posters with

procedural notices. These posters' contents are also within the *Green Book*– they are posters of particular elements of the book's content. Along the walls are stacks of chairs, lots of chairs. These chairs get moved around a lot because people are constantly coming in and out of the space for the meetings within. They use the chairs to sit upon. They are in stacks because the chairs need a place to rest after constantly being arranged and rearranged. There is a diversity of chair styles, of plastic, metal and wood.

## **2h To change a law, that is all**

The PAH received national attention when they brought their *Iniciativa Legislativa Popular por la Vivienda Digna* (ILP) before the Spanish Parliament. The ILP stands for the Popular Legislative Initiative for Dignified Housing. Besides its dignity, we characterize the ILP as central to the PAH's bodily composition because it formalizes the group's action-oriented goals. With their efforts to pressure the Federal Government to pass it, three notable events came to pass. First, in effort to pressure legislators, the group began utilizing the *escrache* protest form, discussed later on in section 3l. *Confrontation*; suffice to say now that they are a specific style of protest that earned them much press attention. Second, in organizing for the ILP, Ada Colau addressed the parliament and with her eloquent speaking, became a national figure. Third, the failure of the Parliament to pass this immensely popular ILP contextually reconfirmed to many that the Spanish political system is broken, that it does not represent the interests of the people. (Cruz 2012)

The ILP legislative initiative stalled in April 2013. (Castro, Irene & Noelia Román 2013) But due to the insurgent Catalan independence movement, the Barcelona PAH decided to present a similar initiative to the Cataluña Parliament named the *ILP Habitatge*. (El Diario, July 10, 2014). The logic for their decision was two-fold; it would maintain pressure on politicians to take a stance on the ILP, and in the case of Cataluña's actual independence the initiative would have force of law. Gathering signatures for the ILP requires individuals to commit time to the project. During PAH meetings, the signature-gathering activists tally each week's signatures. During a Monday Welcoming Assembly when people are incorporating the group, the female facilitator says, "All the PAH does

ultimately is to fight against this law, because it is unjust.”

She is referring to the Spanish laws that govern bankruptcy. These laws define bankruptcy in a manner unique from the rest of Europe and the West. In Spain, banks can repossess and resell a foreclosed property while nevertheless continuing to demand that the mortgage holder’s (and/or co-signer) full debt be repaid. The facilitator continues, “The banks have empty houses all over Spain. In Cataluña there are 70 PAHs, they’re in almost every city. In each group, you’re welcome in our group, to get empowered, inspired. The banks are not interested in your health, with your spirit. They just want your money.”

The ILP Habitatge, similar to the national ILP, places five demands upon the Catalan Parliament. The first demand is to provide what they call “a second opportunity.” This is actually a demand that the government change its bankruptcy policy into a non-punitive one, so that a debtor is not burdened with a lifetime of debt regardless of who ends up with the property. The second demand is that renters be given public aid if they are at risk of eviction. The third is to stop all evictions throughout *Cataluña*, and that banks should make all efforts to settle debt disagreements. The fourth demand is to ensure a Cataluña-wide right to housing by turning large real estate developments and holdings into public housing. And finally, the fifth demand is to guaranteed basic income, including a guarantee for basic utility services.

The following day (January 13, 2015), like every Tuesday, is the PAH’s General Assembly. It is in this meeting where questions that affect the entirety of the Barcelona PAH are discussed and agreements are reached. During this first Tuesday meeting of the New Year, with a Christmas tree still in the office, a thirty-something man discusses the ILP. Because of political circumstances that I will discuss in *3m. The Party as Citizen’s Platform* section, he describes how political parties are once again paying attention to the ILP. “The parties say they support the PAH, but it doesn’t mean anything. If we push forward with the local ILP Habitatge, it will be easy to mark them and hold them accountable at the municipal level. We can hold them accountable.... It’s become difficult

for the PAH. We don't want the parties to assume the PAH. They're not talking about the PAH now. If we stay quiet, they don't want to fight the banks for us. It's a historic moment. If they fight the banks with us, it's a compromise of the parties. It is not the PAH who compromise, but the other way around." Many in the group, about 70 people sitting in an elongated circle on chairs arranged two to four rows deep, hold their hands up and wiggle their fingers to demonstrate agreement.

Over the course of this meeting, a red-haired woman who's announced that her housing situation is now settled ("I got my house! Thank you so much. I won't become homeless, I won't be thrown out by the bank!"), rallies those present to volunteer to gather more signatures in support of the ILP Habitatge. Mark adds. "If the law changes, everything changes." This echoes something Juan had said yesterday, "If the laws change, the PAH ceases to exist."

In response to Mark's comments, Raul (a man who appears to be in his late 40's) speaks up. He regularly volunteers to gather signatures. He's upset that it's always the same group that travels to the La Maquinista shopping center on Saturdays to gather signatures. His outburst is sudden and notable because despite the emotionality of the meeting (they're dealing with possible evictions, crimes of the state and banking sector) the tenor has been calm. People had recently volunteered to join him but didn't follow through. He wants people to fulfill their commitments; after all, they've signed their name on a list that is posted on the wall.

Mark responds, "Its difficult. I give you encouragement and peace! We can't scare people into doing this. We have thousands of meetings, evictions. Our lives are precarious in both our work and doubly as activists. It is very difficult. But we keep on walking."

### **3 Expansion, confrontation**

The section (3) describes how the constituted body of the PAH negotiates the fluid common relations and formal oppositions it engages and encounters in preserving its dignified self-identity and moving towards its goals. In that the PAH's primary mode of



activity is informal politics, they maintain through powerfully performed social antagonism a distinction between *the people* and *the politicians*. This section honors this distinction by looking at how the PAH organizes relations within the common social terrain of Barcelona, and how the PAH demands its self-dignity in the face of the banks and state who would deny them of it.

### **3a The beginning of the PAH**

Lucia Delgado is one of the PAH's four co-founders. Previously, she'd had little more than a passing experience with organizing. Her most memorable encounter with activism previous to the PAH was at an immigrant rights conversation in the *Raval* neighborhood—there she and other attendees nodded off to the boredom of the meeting's theoretical abstraction—everyone knew the meeting wouldn't result in action. Other activist groups dwell too much in things not so concrete, Delgado distinguishes the PAH from other in how it centralize a praxis towards one eventual goal—ending laws that punish debtors and renters.

During our conversation of January 27, 2015 Delgado explained how the PAH's organizational body initially struggled to find a consistent meeting space. Eventually they found a steady place in the *Barrio Gothic*, the old Roman part of the Barcelona. Delgado sees a consistent meeting space as key to the group's initial success. Consistency of location allowed for meetings to run in trial-and-error fashion. At the beginning, they'd paper the city with posters aimed at attracting people affected by the emerging housing crisis. From the beginning to today the PAH draws a diverse slice of Barcelona's demographics.<sup>250</sup> The PAH's first eviction defenses were for houses owned by working class Ecuadorian<sup>251</sup> immigrants. “It made sense that these were the first people who came

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250 For a demographic breakdown of Barcelona PAH participants, see Macias (2016), which demonstrates that only a little more than half of PAH participants are of Spanish ancestry, the second most dominant group being Ecuadorians, than Peruvians. Combined as one group, people from countries in South Asia make up the fourth largest group after Columbians.

251 See Saurez 2014 for interviews with and discussions of early PAH immigrant members' experiences.

to the PAH, because they really needed us.” While European citizens had family to fall back upon, these people had no one but the organization, Delgado explained. As such, that this emergent social movement’s composition would fall outside the traditional left/right narrative of Spanish politics is at least partially based upon the common though unique circumstances of the recent immigrants– their political allegiances had not been solidified elsewhere.

When Delgado first understood that Spain’s eviction law allowed for eviction after one month’s arrears, and for the bank to demand the full return of the original loan even after taking the home, she couldn’t believe it. She was shocked to discover just how ill-informed she was about Spanish politics. “I didn’t even know how to spell *desahucio* [eviction]– I didn’t know where the letter ‘h’ was. I had no idea what a *daccion en pago*<sup>252</sup> was.” She remembers the depth of shame and guilt that early PAH members felt, and how impossible it seemed to relieve meetings’ environment of the weight of those feelings. Yet unwinding this systemic shame and guilt became an early and ultimate goal of the group.<sup>253</sup> “Our first meetings were four-hour-long sessions of non-stop crying.” But through the intense emotional process, they learned to “trust the assembly,” to let the momentarily constituted group decide upon actions either concrete (shall we do an eviction blockade?) or abstract (how can we best support the person suffering in front of me today, and next week?).

### **3b Bringing the outside in**

After the welcome, the routine first minutes of this Tuesday, mid-January meeting are reserved for report-backs and announcements from visitors. For example, I found the length of time given for a discussion with the visitor from Leonard Peltier International

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252 A *daccion en pago* is a legal term that refers to the cancellation of an unpaid debt after the bank takes possession of the property.

253 “It is the problem that we victims of the crisis face, when we hit rock bottom and realize that it is not possible to take care of the debts; to overcome the shame, the stigma and fear associated with the process, and to dare to talk about the situation we are facing, even in the immediate environment. One of the most important achievements of the PAH was to visualize an individual problem, contained within an intimate and private space, and make it a social issue...” (Colau & Alemany 2014 20)

Solidarity Network surprisingly long.

Then the PAH organizer named Carlos gave a report back. During my January 2015 stay, he was one of the more visible activist-oriented PAH members; meeting facilitators sought him out for advice, other PAH members would direct me to him when they couldn't respond to my questions. During my visit, Carlos had left and returned from a housing activist meet-up in Rome. He described how the rendezvous was aimed at conceptualizing a grassroots, pan-European anti-eviction network. He described the neighborhood-level organization in Rome that hosted the event. "They have 30 occupied homes, there's a house specifically for survivors of domestic and economic violence, if you don't have money or support, you can go there... They generate their own economy."

An hour before each Monday welcome meeting is the weekly 5PM student meeting. This is scheduled specifically to orient researchers and journalists within the PAH project. The meeting provides an intimate forum for researchers to directly question whichever PAH member has taken on the responsibility of attending. I sat in the circle with MA and PhD researchers from Spain, a French MA journalism student and a Brazilian reporter on assignment in Spain.

The PAH member hosting the first student meeting I attended was curious about the overall thrust of my research and informed me when I said I'd hope to get to know the PAH over the course of several weeks, that I should feel free to attend any meeting I'd like. He mentioned others who'd embedded themselves for fixed periods: a New Yorker, a Japanese filmmaker who'd been with them for a year. He pointed me towards Carlos in case I needed help with access.

He could have also mentioned the several other non-Spanish researchers embedded with the PAH that I'd come to know. Over the course of their studies, they'd become integrated into the organization and also worked as activist/researchers. Perhaps these researchers had first entered the PAH through this student meeting. The point is that these meetings are not meant to isolate students and others from the PAH but rather to provide

them with an attentive setting to facilitate a clear entrée into the organization. Ultimately, academic researchers become one small constituent group involved with the PAH.

As the *Green Book* says, the PAH is not only for people who are facing eviction from rental or owned property. People find their way into the group through activist interests and a “do-gooder” spirit. There was, for example Julia, a Spanish law school graduate who was between jobs and wanted to do something meaningful with her time. Based on her legal skills, she was asked to present the PAH to a visiting group that was interested in the legal issues. She also volunteered to help out on a video shoot.

This video shoot, which we will soon go in to greater detail, serves as an example of how researchers and activists seem to find responsibility within the PAH. Attending my first assembly, I was asked along with other new researchers, to present myself. I did. Vanessa, the French journalism student also introduced herself, and asked if anyone would mind if she filmed the meeting. She was told that filming would be no problem. Later, when somebody asked if the media collective could film a short about a family facing eviction, attendees realized that the usual media collective was not present and would be difficult to contact. People turned to Vanessa to see if she would volunteer. She agreed to do so and began organizing with the person who’d made the request.

### **3c The casual accumulation of media**

Let us not forget the paperwork that is produced by the PAH, the posters wheat-pasted not only on the windows of banks but also on telephone junction boxes, walls and shop windows. Walking down certain streets, the wheat-pasted posters can serve as an archive or history lesson on recent Spanish mass-movements. Of course, there are similar routes through the web, social media and other online platforms; through which people of all classes and smartphone plans have access to a wide breadth and depth of information about the PAH and other activist organizations. By the many casual effects of their activities, the PAH generates media and meditated things that serve to outwardly communicate its concepts. This seeds the grounds for a common appreciation of the group.

In his book *Organization of the Organizationless*, philosopher and media theorist Rodrigo Nunes (2014) discusses the capacity for activist networks to produce so much material at their centers and also coincidentally at their margins— where memes and Facebook clicktivism contributes to a movement’s wider sensibility. He specifically names the PAH as being within a category of groups that because of their core wager (in the PAH’s case its goal to change an unjust relationship between law and life) are able to mobilize support for their overall goals if not for each particular initiative.<sup>254</sup> Nunes suggests that projects like the PAH “care for the whole” of their mediatic ecosystem – which includes their organized core and the more horizontal margin of fans, ‘likes’ and comments which they need in order to maintain a meaningful socio-political profile beyond the activist milieu. (43)

In their paper on the PAH’s self-imaging communication strategies, embedded researcher Eduard Sala and co-writer Artiz Tutor (2016) build upon the analysis of the PAH’s internal *Communication Commission*. By their analysis, a key strategy for the PAH’s general communicativity across the common terrain is identified with how its members pose for online pictures. They note that while normative images of ‘disobedient’ activity presents images of police violence and victims in misery, PAH imagery aims to communicate something else. (99–100) For example, for social media representations of bank occupations, the PAH posts images of members joyfully occupying the banks that have so greatly brutalized them:

Against the drama of evictions, the PAH organizes rage and converts it into a call for rebellion against the financial policy that uses debt as a way to control the affected – the debt tightens around you and hides any vision of the future, it holds

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254 “It is through an awareness of a diverse ecology of agents and interactions and the political potentials offered by the conjuncture that interventions can be devised. These require neither exclusivity nor adherence to a programme or group identity, but can nonetheless mobilize, structure and coordinate the collective behavior of parts of the network-system according to a certain strategic wager with relatively well-defined ends in sight. This is what those initiatives have done that managed to break the deadlocks in which some of the network-systems in question found themselves after the period of occupations, such as the *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca* and *15MpaRato* in Spain, or the Rolling Jubilee in the United States...” (Nunes 2014 43)

back and sequesters the energies and prevents families from moving forward. To see oneself as affected allows one to move the struggle to the concrete ground of the body – of the bodies, of the multitude – without being lost in the world of ideas. The centrality of the body concretizes the struggle, visibilises the perpetrator, points out those responsible and offers material and immediate solutions – direct action, without judicial waiting, against the banks that evict them. The performative practice of embodying the alternative, establishes the positioning from which to protest, which adds legitimacy – because it is an open and honest posture, arising from suffering... (94)

For Sala and Tutor, these embodied images are the antithesis of the selfie's individualizing narrative. (94) The PAH pays attention to the meanings of images portraying individual suffering at the hands of the bank, and to portrayals of individual and common overcoming of this suffering within the halls of power. It is Sala and Tutor's thesis that the PAH's basically critical imagery facilitates the simple communicative translatability of PAH core messages to be further mediatized through memes and other forms of clicktivism beyond the PAH's immediate grasp.

### **3d Making production**

The PAH occasionally produces online videos to publicize eviction cases that merit particular attention. I observed one such production, made to help an extended family fighting their potential eviction. At the suggestion of an activist lawyer, the PAH decided to film a short clip with the help of Vanessa, Susan and Julia. The media collective usually directs and shoots these clips, but in their absence Susan volunteered. Vanessa would work her video camera.

Susan often facilitates meetings; she's got a strong presence. Her manner and energy is like that of a talk show host: she's well dressed, blond and is able to concisely summarize situations, proposals and concepts with clear and energetic articulation. This manner serves well in meetings; she gets to the point. She brings these mannerisms to her directorial debut.

The intergenerational family that is to be the clip's subject is already sitting in the PAH office when I arrive on the evening of January 15th. Their conflict with the bank is a family affair because the son had fallen into arrears and mutual aid through family support apparently runs strong in this working-class family. It also had become a *de jure* intergenerational affair when the grandparents undersigned the bank loan; the bank had begun bothering them, too, for repayment.

As director, Susan's role was to coach each family member before the camera so that they could tell their story in succinct sound bites. She would call each member one-at-a-time to sit in front of Vanessa's camera. She called them in a sensible order, first the signer of the loan, then the wife, then the signer's siblings. She then called out previous generations until more than 8 people had spoken. Susan would let each person have a go at stating his or her bit but then inevitably intervene. She would stand between the camera and the family member, sometimes crouching face-to-face, putting her hands on their knees or shoulders. She would coach them on their narratives.

For example, the following is a descriptive exchange between Maria, the wife of the debtor, and Susan. Maria is explaining the scenario before Vanessa's rolling camera, "The police came and threatened to evict my three young children and me."

Susan interjects, "It's important to say that they came through the door. ... Say something like, 'On the 21<sup>st</sup> of July, they threw open our door'."

Maria repeats it once and then again at Susan's prompting for dictation and emotional clarity.

Maria continues on with her story. Susan instructs Maria to name their banker and say, "Marino Baro cheated us." Maria repeats it, then Susan massages Maria's shoulders. "Say it again, Marino Baro cheated us!" putting emphasis on "cheated us".

Susan runs to the PAH's entrance to check on something unrelated while asking Maria to

practice repeating the line again, “On the 21<sup>st</sup> of July, the police came.”

Maria repeats this again, and Susan asks Vanessa if the camera is running. Vanessa confirms that it is.

Susan tells Maria to say, “I feel cheated.”

After several takes, Susan excuses her and Maria, exhausted, happily shouts “Sí se puede!”

Susan takes the time to give make-up and clothing advice to each family member before they’re seated in front of the camera. Julia helps out. When the grandfather comes up to speak, he does so wearing a pair of sunglasses. Susan asks him to take them off. He does, but then explains that he’s blind in one eye and that without glasses he’d look strange. He puts the glasses back on. Susan checks with Vanessa to make sure the sunglasses look all right in the camera. Vanessa says its ok, and he keeps them on.

The older man jokes on camera. He playfully curses out the landlord, “That son of a bitch Marino Baro is going to throw me out on the street.” Susan provides the man with words to describe the situation. He disagrees, “I’m from the villages... I wouldn’t say it that way.

“Papí!” his daughter interjects, suggesting he follow Susan’s script.

He does.

It’s stressful; its hard interpersonal work, but the work is accomplished with a few laughs. I can’t assume that this is representative of the normal process of making Barcelona PAH videos – the practiced media collective wasn’t on hand. This was the first time Susan directs, and because the process was so exhausting, she said it would also be her last time. In reviewing other PAH videos online though, I recognize in her direction a form she was following. These videos also weave together short and direct first-person



statements to make an overall narrative.

What is telling from this video shoot is the fact that a horizontal organization disciplines individual voice via collective technique. In relation to the overall goal of meeting housing needs, affected people ultimately trust that the cost of their participation is low enough and that ultimately the effort is worthwhile. The cost is having to temporarily submit one's subjective individual voice to staging techniques; it's a relatively cheap investment for an effort whose return could be a stabilized housing situation and the end of a punitive debt.

### **3e Grassroots policies**

The PAH has two projects intended to confront vertical governmental structures, while also reverberating through the wider informal social and mediatic terrains. Through reverberations, the general social terrain become familiar with the ethical claims the PAH make against vertical governance; and by so acting, the PAH continues to articulate the extent of its own informal horizon. Discussions of both projects follow.

The first project (discussed in 3g.) develops a people's competency of absolutely meaningful social practice, and solidifies the activist ethic of the PAH. This competency of practice, the *Obra Social* [Social Work] insists on and provides for the social assurance that anyone who is with the PAH will not become homeless. The *Obra Social* is the group's measure of last resort. Its horizon is self-imminent, claiming the right to housing by deed, building on the PAH's organizational capacities to fulfill promises by legal and extra-legal measures. In other words, the *Obra Social* doesn't ask anything from the state to fulfill this promise. As such, like other PAH functions, it only requires the organizational capacities of affected people and those in solidarity with them. Activists call upon and utilize popular support in claiming the right to house each other in squatted situations. By seeking nothing from the state their actions brush up against its punitive legal structures. Radical in its efforts, its efforts preserve the ethical promise of the PAH.

The second project (discussed in 3h. and beyond) expands out through the horizontal

social terrain to normalize and make common sense of the PAH's primary policy directive— the transformation of Spanish bankruptcy laws via legislative initiatives, which, if passed would end the PAH's *raison d'etre*. Unlike the *Obra Social*, which operates in what is at best a legal grey area (squatting), the ILP work began entirely within legal terrain. Yet because of its effectiveness, the Spanish government began crafting laws in order to hamper its activity.

### **3f Grassroots policy, social work**

*Obra Social* means social work. The PAH's use of the name is like a pun. It is by the *Obra Social* working group that the PAH fulfills its promise that no one with the PAH will go homeless; the PAH ensures, through squatting, that everyone with the PAH will be housed. In the description of their activity lays the pun. At the heart of the PAH's current analysis of the banking crisis is the fact that while Spain's banks were bailed out in 2012 with public funds, people continue to be dehousing. While banks received the benefits of the State's services, it is only through the work of the PAH's *Obra Social* that the social benefits received by the banks are socialized.

Collectively, the PAH helps its affected members as they go through the basic phases of the eviction process. From the PAH's 2015 *Green Book*; the PAH promises to provide people threatened with eviction: "1) training and tools to defend yourself, developed by many people including movement lawyers. 2) mutual support; you will never be alone." (23)

To fulfill its first promise, the PAH helps its members through what they've outlined as the three basic phases of the eviction process:

The first phase begins when one is first unable or foresees an inability to pay for housing. Here negotiations with the banks, or landlord in the case of rental property, are still very open. If affected people come to the PAH during this phase, they are counseled to seek a debt relief plan from the bank, a return of the house and a cancellation of the debt, or some other sort of agreement that moves the affected resident into social housing:

meaning that the bank formally repossess the home and the owner becomes a renter of the property at an affordable rent, or the owner is moved to social housing. (32)

The second phase begins with the arrival of a final 10-day eviction notice regarding unpaid debt. At this point, legal machinery begins and the struggle moves through legal and legally prescribed proceedings. During this period, the PAH suggests that its useful to find the service of a lawyer, because by doing so member can “gain time”, and demonstrate to the judge that they are doing everything to resolve the situation through legal routes. Other steps in this phase include continued negotiation with the bank. (34–38)

Throughout all three stages, the *Green Book* recommends that its members utilize the resources of the government. This buys time, affords some services and acts to insist upon the state’s legally prescribed ethical responsibility within the process.

The third phase occurs when all previous legal routes have been exhausted, when previous postponements have come to an end, and eviction appears imminent. Here the PAH suggests direct appeals to the bank for the release of the debt, and to a judge on grounds with previous standings before the court; for example, sickness, low income and single parenthood. (39–44)

“If the date (of eviction) arrives and there is no indication of a satisfactory solution, we can resist an eviction with a concentration in the street, as a way of postponing it. In one way or another, you should know that we have been able to stop most anything.” (45)

The final interior page of the *Green Book* is a photograph of an occupied building with a large hanging banner that reads, “Social Work (of) The PAH.” Before this, the *Green Book* states, “If we can’t stop the eviction, we can begin to participate in the Obra Social of the PAH. Remember that in the PAH, nobody is left to the street (homeless).” And on a second banner in the photograph of the same occupied house, “We rescue people, not banks.” (47)

I observed the Summer 2013 housewarming party, organized by the *Obra Social* group, for the occupied four-story building pictured in the *Green Book*. I'd received a text from a friend that something (she didn't know what) was happening related to the PAH. She directed me to a plaza in the centrally located immigrant and working-class neighborhood of Raval. From above in the buildings, the banners were unfurled to the buzz of toy horns as balloons were released in the plaza. Champagne glasses befitting a celebration were passed around. The diverse PAH membership was visually unified by its members wearing their green logo-emblazoned PAH t-shirts. It was a loud and celebratory event that made the news.

This occupation was organized by the *Obra Social* working group. Four racially diverse, single mother-led families were rehoused through this PAH action. (El Lokal 2013) Until it was squatted, this tenement had been owned by the government-rescued Valencia Bank. That Valencia and its holding company, the CaixaBank continue to evict and make homeless people while being beneficiaries of the bailout and holders of many vacant properties provided the specific logic to occupy this property.

The *Obra Social* working group meets every other Wednesday. I attended the January 21<sup>st</sup> meeting. Though not entirely, the core of this group appear to be younger activist types. In addition to organizing PAH squats (which happens occasionally, but not too often), they give advice to those threatened with imminent eviction on negotiation tactics, on how to squat and on squatter's rights. Attendees sit in a small circle; the facilitators ask everyone present to speak up and explain why they are at the meeting. Several introduce themselves as activists interested in helping the *Obra Social*. Others speak up about their needs.

Through tears, a young woman describes her situation. She has family problems and doesn't live at home, though luckily her boyfriend helps out. Currently, she is illegally occupying a building that is not well maintained, the ceiling is collapsing. Nevertheless, she's worried about being kicked out. A male PAH member asks if she's employed, she sheepishly explains her tenuous work situation. The PAH member explains that he

doesn't care whether or not she's working, but that he's asked only to better understand her situation. He tells her that she's with the PAH now, and that a solution will be found. She stops crying as he says that she should trust the process, that the eviction process won't move quickly and that she should trust the PAH's process. He says that the PAH "is tough. We want to fight the banks." She repeats, "I want to fight the banks." At the end of the meeting, she asks if there's anything she can do besides attending general PAH and *Obra Social* meetings? "Yes" she's told after a little thought, "You can help with the ILP."

### **3g Common sense and abstract laws**

On the face of it, you wouldn't think that pursuing a legislative initiative would be one of the more radicalizing elements of the PAH's work. Yet while the activities of the *Obra Social* are actively radical in their ignoring of state-authorized property relations, the ILP has demonstrated its power to radicalize people by clarifying political positions and solidarities. By perusing the Popular Legislative Initiative (ILP) that several things happened; the PAH gained national attention and popularity, its participation numbers skyrocketed, PAH co-founder and spokesperson Ada Colau became a national figure, the PAH introduced a new protest form to Europe, it brought the Spain's bankruptcy laws before the European Human Rights Commission and won, it further clarified the division between the governing classes and the people. Below, I discuss the space for the ILP in relationship the wider field of horizontal relations that the PAH exists within.

With the ILP's signature gathering and publicity, the PAH informally expands through its horizontal limits. Here "expands through" refers to how by meetings and chance encounters, people evaluate PAH concepts – such as its dignity, its tactics, its ethic, its understanding of the crisis – so that any possible knowledge becomes a common archive, a general intellect, of and for making the PAH legible. When the PAH informally (by postering) or formally (through any number of public activities) interfaces with the common public, they inform and function through common notions – extending into broader society that makes sense of their actions. The PAH are successful to the extent that their work seems broadly sensible – the PAH's popularity is based on how they maintain an ethic that is commonly seen as meaningful in the eyes of a common that

recognizes their activities as proper responses from victims to a crisis they did not cause. This is not to suggest that this is the only way for a group to be successful, though it does seem to explain how the PAH can act in the law's grey area and remain popular. Their activities are generally understandable. Popular support and informal allowance of their activity is the translation for general good will. Most of the rest of Section 3 looks at how the PAH continues to work through the informal until their limits are revealed against the underlying architectures of governance that remains in opposition to their activity.

On January 17<sup>th</sup>, I observed a signature-gathering event in the neighborhood of Barceloneta, a traditionally working-class waterfront community that is now in transition. Signature gathering is not hard work, it just requires sitting and chatting with people about the Cataluña ILP. Barceloneta is situated next to the inner harbor that has been revamped for pleasure boats and private yachts. The neighborhood also borders a long sandy Mediterranean beach that is accessible by the city's public metro system. Barceloneta has been feeling the strong squeeze of gentrification where flats are being turned into tourist accommodations and spare rooms are being monetized through "sharing economy" websites like Airbnb. In 2014, two naked tourists wandered through the neighborhood for three hours as long-term neighbor residents watched aghast. This moment galvanized a sense felt by residents that the scale had been tipped much too far in the direction of the tourist economy<sup>255</sup>.

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255 In 2014, two naked Italian tourists wandered through the neighborhood for three hours as long-term neighborhood residents watched aghast. This was the galvanizing moment where residents felt that the scale had been tipped too far in the direction of the tourist economy. "Imagine that you're in a tiny house, with three children, unemployed with no money for vacations and you have to put up with the screams and fiesta of tourists next door. It's unbearable." (Kassam 2014a)

According to the Guardian report about the protests that this event sparked, "One protest this week saw locals take to the streets armed with a home-made map, detailing the location of apartments on rent for tourists. The protesters then sought out the owners of these tourist lets, confronting them and urging them to close their businesses for the good of the neighborhood. While municipal officials say there are 72 licensed tourist rentals in La Barceloneta, a quick search of online rental portals like Airbnb show more than 600 tourists lets available in the area." (Kassam 2014a)

This signature-gathering event was planned to coincide with a public design charrette for the *Siglo XX Social Centre*.<sup>256</sup> The charrette, held in the open-air public square in the center of the neighborhood, began with music and speeches. The 50 or so attending people then (mostly older Spanish men and women along with a mix of younger multi-ethnic community members) were broken down into two groups. The groups looked at floor plans for the proposed revamping in order to suggest ideas and uses for the Siglo XX building. Many of these residents have been up in arms about the deep touristification of their living space, so it is interesting that though they are shirking under the weight of one notion of culture (tourist-oriented culture) many residents imagine the space could fulfill other cultural needs.

An older man stands up. “My name is Martin, but I think you all know me. Our neighborhood is being overrun by tourists...we need to recuperate the traditional food from here, to communicate it. We need a space for theatre, poetry and a digital communication that is ours.” This is a context of important minor differences, where the leisure culture for sale through the neoliberal market place bumps up against traditional anti-fascist and anarchist cultures of the proud neighborhood. There may be an awareness that while neoliberalism has resolved immediate class tensions around labor relations by removing boss/employee relationships (through the rearranging of the port and fishing industries and making much of their manual labor redundant), the larger questions of social reproduction remain unresolved. This charrette is but one way to process these unresolved tensions. The freedom of the tourists to loudly overrun the place is built upon the real or psychological displacement of the neighborhood residents themselves – the neighborhood seems to the tourists to appear empty of any social form; it appears as a place to be at rather than to be in.

Within this environment, the PAH sets up its table to gather signatures for their Popular Legislative Initiative which effectively puts an end to housing speculation. A person walks up to the PAH table which is situated on the edge but well within the charrette area.

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<sup>256</sup> *The Siglo XX* was a historic anarchist and working class club in the neighborhood that had been nationalized and turned into a neighborhood center and then recently shuttered.

“What is this doing here?” they ask the middle-aged PAH members gathering signatures at the table.

“It’s for a popular initiative to bring to the parliament so that they stop evictions and don’t kick people into the streets.”

“Ok.”...and the PAH gathers another signature.

In nine months, *between* June 2012 and February 2013, the PAH collected 1,402,845 signatures in support of the ILP initiative to change the Spanish Bankruptcy law. Spain’s Parliament requires only 500,000 signatures. When brought before Parliament, the initiative polled nationwide at 85% support (*20 Minutes*, 2013), but the ruling party, the *Partido Popular* (PP), refused to consider it.

The signatures were gathered from throughout Spain. Contingent to this moment, the PAH transitioned into becoming an organization with a national presence. New PAHs began sprouting up around the country. On February 5, 2013, PAH co-founder Ada Colau addressed the Parliament in support of the PAH’s initiative. (*LA Vanguardia* 2013) On April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2013 the Government passed an empty bankruptcy reform law that did not include any of the ILP’s recommendations. (*Reuters* 2013)

Sensing that they would be face an uphill battle— Colau’s parliamentary address discussed whether the Parliament would consider the Initiative, and was not meant as a discussion of the Initiative’s merits – the PAH had already launched their *escrache* campaign by the end of February. (PAH 2013) The state chose not to consider the ILP, even though the PAH had followed all rules and gathered so many signatures. Thus, the *escraches* were a method of protest aimed at identifying and pressuring singular Parliament members to vote for the Initiative. Here is the moment when grassroots, horizontal movements are forced to recognize the vertical nature of power and apply distinct techniques to address that power differential.



### **3h Against the state**

When people encounter others with whom they can't relate to but must, they invent or utilize methods that allow for communication. This might simply be an encounter between co-workers who speak different languages, or a qualitative disjuncture where the difference as constituted appears seemingly insurmountable. In the case of the PAH, the encounter between their horizontal plane and the vertical plane of the state, as represented by the Spain's governmental failure to even discuss the contents of their petition drive, is an exchange where the state refuses the horizontality of a general intellect. The State sees that it has nothing in common with the PAH, so communication seems insurmountable.

In the following subsection, I describe two types of encounter between the horizontal of the people and the vertical of governance. In one encounter the PAH laterally redirects vertical state machinations. In the second, people effort to directly halt state machine functions. Continuing with the distinction between the people and the government, I write about these encounters as though they occur between Newtonian constants – between two distinct and unstoppable forces that meet on a plane of equivalence. Others might choose here to identify meaningful communication at the micropolitical and interpersonal level that occurs nevertheless. But to highlight the PAH's nature, it serves to trace an encounter between two unyielding forces. Surprisingly, these examples demonstrate that it seems far simpler to halt state activity than it is to redirect it– and so we begin with what is easy. I discuss it as the piecemeal blockade of a singular home eviction. The attempted redirection of the state machine through the ILP and *escraches* proves a more complex operation and is discussed second.

### **3i Against the state: halting the state machine**

Though the PAH takes every effort to try and avoid police-enforced evictions, they do occasionally happen. To avoid eviction if you are a homeowner, one joins a PAH bank group, joining the group named for the bank from where the loan originates. Groups meet regularly to share information about each bank's loan officers, their negotiating tactics and overall strategies. They support each other during negotiations and to organize targeted media campaigns and direct actions particular to bank policies and how they

treat their disputes. Through the fine-grained pooling of knowledge of particular bank practices, the PAH has been able to halt many eviction processes through informed negotiation and threat of targeted protest before they reach the stage where members stand against the police at the house entryway. When actually blockading evictions, the notion of dignity emerges as a core concept again. In confrontations, the Barcelona PAH maintains a no-violence code that means that while they may block an entrance to an apartment, they do not fight back and don't explicitly resist arrest.

During the January 28th Tuesday Meeting, the frequent facilitator Mark has been discussing the recent experiences the PAH organization in the nearby city of Sabadell. "Sabadell is meeting with the cops so that they don't treat us (the PAH) as animals. We have to lower the tension between the PAH and the Police." They are discussing a recent eviction defense in Sabadell where the police dealt with the eviction blockade with excessive force. One older woman passionately decries the police action and asks to have it noted that she was at the defense and was roughed up. "This can happen with the local PAHs, but we are in Barcelona, not Sabadell."

Later, Lucia explains to me, that over time, the Barcelona PAH has built a relationship with the police; the Barcelona police know PAH activists won't attack them, that "we are orderly and won't threaten the police's safety." She mentions that of course there are individual police officers who are still rough and violent, but that sort of behavior is no longer the norm.

This fact may or may not lessen any unspoken fear attendant to putting one's body into an eviction blockade. I planned on attending several eviction defenses while in Barcelona, which I imagined would ultimately involve joining others to sit down in front of someone's doorway to risk arrest. Nevertheless, because of last minute legal wrangling, not one people/police confrontation occurred during my 2015 Barcelona and Madrid research; the PAH's processes to stop forced evictions are effective. Many evictions blockades were called off the night before or while standing in solidarity with the victim in front of their house. So what I did join were blockades that became eventually

canceled evictions; with PAH members joining the threatened victim, phones in hand communicating with off-site lawyers and other authorities and in dialog with other attending PAH members at the street-level entrance to the home and apartment.

### **3j Confrontation: eviction blockades**

While in Spain in 2015, I left my accommodations early to attend three eviction defenses. I will describe one of them that I attended in Barcelona.

I attended the January 27th eviction defense. It was announced at the Monday Welcome Meeting, because the eviction was to occur the following day. The woman being evicted had been renting the flat from a large real estate firm. “My lawyer told me on Friday that I’d be kicked out on Tuesday.” According to Barcelona regulations, city social services are supposed to provide evicted people with temporary housing. Unfortunately, the city wasn’t following through.

At the meeting beforehand, Mark listens to her story and says, “It’s not a foreclosure eviction, but her building is owned by a large real estate firm, it’s a big building. I think we should support her, stand at her door and protect her.” The action is quickly organized; we are to meet at the address and expect to be there any time between 8AM and 3PM. Seventy-odd people at the meeting consense to the plan; because these sorts of decisions are routine, this all happens very quickly.

Susan chimes in, “We should immediately demand a stay of eviction from the court, based on the size of the real estate firm.” The attendees applaud as Mark repeats what Susan has finished with— “We should stand at her door and protest.”

I arrive at the house the next day at 10.15 a.m. The neighborhood is dense and urban, almost urbane even though the inexpensive or shuttered shops hint at other economic realities beyond urban and architectural design. I slip on my green PAH t-shirt and join the group already in front of the building. The 17 people present on the street are mostly familiar faces, including meeting facilitators and frequent assembly speakers; Susan,

Mark, Juan, Carlos, Rebecca and others.

One person whose face I don't recognize approaches me and we began to chat. She informs me that we'll know what the court has decided by 11AM. I'm surprised that at 11.05, a court representative arrives by car, and cell phone negotiations occur with the renter— with the court representative and PAH consultation beside her, and her lawyer at the court on the other side. The court representative leaves. At 11.24, someone calls a meeting for the now larger crowd of maybe 25 people. The eviction has been postponed for a month. At 12.04, I leave just after the mass of people say goodbye to each other and congratulate the renter.

The eviction has been postponed; it may be necessary to mount this sort of defense again. And if this eviction is canceled altogether or some other happy resolution is found, there are ultimately hundreds more evictions that will occur for the PAH to work with. At around 11.35, Mark and Susan had left to scout out the truth of the rumor of another planned eviction happening elsewhere in the neighborhood on that day. If there is an eviction in the works today, they'll contact people via WhatsApp.

I was reminded that though this eviction defense was both easy and victorious, it could have gone the other way. The woman I chatted with, a thirty-something hairdresser from Peru tells me, "I worry about how this eviction process might affect her kids. They've seen this situation on the television news where police come with nightsticks and it gets violent with the PAH who are blocking the staircase and being dragged off. You never know how each defense is going to go."

This one went smoothly. Around the time that I arrived, the renter and some of the PAH walk out of the building's front door carrying a tray of cups, hot water, milk and instant coffee to be served in the building's external foyer. While a few PAH members never leave this area adjacent to the door, most of us stand in small groups along the sidewalk, chatting, occasionally chanting, collecting signatures for the ILP and discussing the situation with neighbors and passers-by. Other than for coffee, we gather in front of the

door twice; once for the victory announcement, and once beforehand to pose for a television camera that had appeared. At these moments, it makes sense to gather together and chant. It also becomes clear to me that we'd also be taking this formation if the police arrived to enforce the eviction.

Neighbors and other passers-by are supportive. At certain moments of the morning, two people are collecting ILP signatures. "Neighbors, did you know there's an eviction today?" "We need to support our neighbors." The most critical comments I hear, from a suit-clad twenty-something, is "Well, I don't know how much she earns, but, how could they do this to a mother?" He sticks around and asks, "How did she end up getting support from you (the PAH)?" to which he's told how she showed up at yesterday's meeting.

The renter herself is Spanish. She's wearing a PAH t-shirt below a cardigan and a large peace-sign necklace. She has eyeglasses and long hair that she wears down. She seems physically fragile, but this is offset by what I see as an emerging confidence. In hand, she's got a clipboard and folder that reads, "I'm the cat lady you've been hearing about." Her teenage son arrives near the end of the event and they seem to stand proudly together.

Throughout the event, we stand and chant. "This eviction will be an occupation." "We are going to stop this eviction." "Neighbors, wake up, (there's) an eviction at your door." It's cold and I have to shuffle my feet to keep my toes warm. Overall the spirit is light. At times, some of the members jump up and down chanting, "I'm from the PAH, from the PAH, from the PAH!" (which rolls off the tongue easier in Spanish than in English.) One PAH member, a man from Ecuador, wears a green sequined hat that looks like it was intended for Saint Patrick's Day parade. Another man has a horn he occasionally blows. A woman suggests that someone come up with a flamenco beat to which we could dance. Then she claps out the appropriate rhythm, partially, I assume, to keep her hands warm. One member eats an apple and his friends joke about collectivizing the apple so that he shares it.

Evictions are halted with a dual strategy of confrontation and mediation with the state (through courts and lawyers, and police-PAH interaction) and the mobilization of popular support (in initiatives and in PAH street-level activities). Despite successes at halting and stopping particular evictions, the general capacity for the banks, property owners and the state to insist on their right to evict remains.

### **3k Confrontation: *escraches***

The two ILPs that the Barcelona PAH have gathered signatures for (the 2013 ILP for the Spanish Parliament and the ILP Habitatge for the Catalunya Assembly) succinctly illuminates the boundary between what the PAH can effectively organize through common-sense notions of what is right, and what it can't. The first ILP, aimed at the Spain's National Parliament saw the PAH's implementation of *escraches* that attempted to work on both sides of the line drawn between grassroots and governance. The second ILP, aimed to bring the political conversation to the Catalunya Parliament, and demonstrates the depth of this chasm.

We begin with a discussion of the National ILP and how the PAH scaled up its activities to convince individual elected officials to support the PAH initiative. In 2012 with collaboration with other social movements,<sup>257</sup> the PAH launched the ILP signatory process. By early February 2013, they'd recognized that the conservative Partido Popular (the PP), headed by Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy, wasn't going to support its three main points. So, on February 4<sup>th</sup>, they announced their *escrache* campaign on their central website with the title; "The PAH's new campaign: *Escraches*. Putting first and last name to those responsible for the financial genocide." (PAH 2013b)

The *escrache*-style protest originates in Argentina, "with the objective of socializing the condemnation and the making visible the unpunished crimes of the past dictatorships." (Balbi 2013 17) Rumor has it that the suggestion that the PAH utilize the *escrache* came from an artist and educator who lives between Barcelona and Argentina. It is worth

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<sup>257</sup> Both ILPs were co-authored by a human rights and social welfare think tank, the Observatorio DESC who play a shadow role in supporting the PAH. Other social justice groups have co-sponsored both ILP's role-out.

mentioning too, is that it was also through the art context that I initially heard of *escraches*. In the distance that the *escrache* has traveled, one can imagine that the *escrache* was a South American cultural import to Spain.

“The PAH’s is not the first reappropriation of this tool.” (Balbi 2013 5) In her essay about how *escraches* make apparent the machinations of injustice that remain intact across generations, Magdalena Balbi describes the ontological essence of the *escrache* in how it positions its voice towards power. *Escraches* “redirect attention towards the logistic of state terrorism, whether that is terror’s operators (oppressors, accomplices), its footprint in everyday spaces (here live the committers of genocide, here were the torture chambers), or the demand for justice (whether judgment and punishment, or social condemnation).” (25)

Balbi describes how the *escrache* came to be as an object relieved from its authorial context through the work of the H.I.J.O.S. (the acronym means ‘children’ in Spanish). The H.I.J.O.S. were a group whose relatives were ‘disappeared’ during Argentina’s dirty war. She describes how the *escrache* evolved with H.I.J.O.S. re-working the representational strategies of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo. The Mothers became internationally recognized as a group that silently stood together in the Plaza de Mayo in solidarity against the Argentinean dictatorship that had *disappeared* their children. Balbi writes, “The *escrache* is no longer only the activity of H.I.J.O.S., it has become an autonomous practice. It has no author, it finds meaning in diverse situations and it propagates itself through alternative means of the production of sociability.” (Balbi 2013 18)

After the governing *Partido Popular* (PP) politicians who drove the defeat of the ILP did not take advantage of the PAH’s offer to arrange meetings with the victims of the mortgage crisis, the group aimed to identify and publicly shame them as people who could change a horribly unpopular law but choose not to.<sup>258</sup> The *escraches* involved

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258 Barcelona-based *Enmedio Art Collective* was enlisted to design a downloadable *escrache* “D.I.Y. Kit” (Balbi 2013 20) that highlighted the fact of the governance’s capacity for and

many methods of theatrical protest, but at their core was the popular ILP and the politicians who refused to change a law so onerous the European Court of Justice ruled that it was out of line with European standards. (Belaza 2013) Protests were unleashed to haunt and shame individual politicians at home, at work, and on the go. *Escraches*, in the form developed by the PAH, are rolling and spontaneous protest aimed to socially isolate targeted individuals from the social realm by surrounding them in public with noise and angry bodies. I did not witness any *escrache* as the campaign was halted before my focused research period. But there are videos of them online, including spontaneous *escraches* emerging as Conservative parliamentarians board airplanes and are identified within the airplane cabin.

The response to the *escraches* was enormous. According to Lucia Delgado, Ada Colau was doing national television broadcasts daily to explain the PAH's position. She wasn't only being asked to explain the ILP; she was being challenged about the ethics of the *escrache* within Spain's constitutional monarchy. Lucia explained the media's hostility to the *escraches* as proof of its being controlled by wealthy interests. The visibility of the PAH increased, and the number of local chapters bloomed. The PAH was awarded by the European Parliament a citizen's prize that was accepted by Ada Colau. Meanwhile, Spain's PP compared the PAH to terrorists and Nazis for the *escrache* tactic (Daley 2013).

In the end, the PAH's ILP did not pass. There were adjustments to the mortgage law, but none significant enough to lessen the way individuals associated with the PAH negatively experienced the housing crisis.

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unwillingness to make change. *The Enmedio Collective* is a project of some former members of the activist *Las Agencias* group that were also involved in the *V de Vivienda* campaign. The main item within the kit were large red and green circles. The green circle said, *Si Se Puede* [Yes we can], the red circle *Pero No Quieren* [But they don't want to]. The red and green were already in use by the PAH for the logo and t-shirt that Marta Abad designed, as was the slogan *Si Se Puede*. The round red and green shapes refer to how Spain's parliamentarian's votes are reported upon, with graphics of red or green buttons recording a yes or no vote in the parliament. *Enmedio* says "...rather than trying to invent something new, we decided to do just the opposite: to reinforce the existing graphic identity." (2013)



### 3l The party as citizen platform

In July 2014, the Barcelona PAH announced the *ILP Habitatge*, aimed at clarifying the Catalan Parliament's position around the Catalan right to housing, humane living conditions and bankruptcy laws. (França 2014) In the month before the effort, Ada Colau and others had begun a process outside the PAH to explore the possibility of forming a party, *Barcelona en Comú*, which was then called *Guanyem*. They were hoping to run in Barcelona's May 2015 municipal elections. (França & Puente 2014.) At that point *Barcelona en Comú* understood itself as a party that had no interest in governing beyond the municipal level. *Barcelona en Comú's*<sup>259</sup> founding followed on the heels of *Podemos'* (another insurgent left party) success in the May 2014 European Parliament elections. (Murcia 2014) *Podemos* itself was only founded in January of that year. (Mendez 2015) *Podemos* and *Barcelona en Comú* and the PAH are seen as strands of the Indignados movement coming out of the Spanish Plaza movements of 2011 that in turn are seen as parallel with the Arab Spring and the Occupy Movement. (Murcia 2014) In other words, there are international events running parallel with these developments.

A final political fact important to the understanding of the PAH's launch of the ILP Habitatge was the renewed energy of the Catalan Independence movement. The Independence movement organized a non-binding public referendum in November 2014 (Kassam 2014b) and the possibility of a Catalan Parliament vote in the near future. (Geoghegan 2015)<sup>260</sup>

So, the ILP Habitatge represents a politically contingent push for the PAH's demands, and is an effort for it to remain relevant within the flux of history. That Ada Colau is both

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259 *Barcelona en Comú* was originally called *Guanyem* until it changed its name soon after its founding in 2014.

260 As this thesis is being completed, the Catalan independence movement is in disarray after the contentious October 1st referendum. Colau, now Barcelona mayor, is ambivalent on this matter. It would seem that her support for the right to vote on the matter was an effort to affirmatively side-step the issue, as she has said she would not vote for independence.

The ILP Habitatge was passed by the Catalan Parliament in 2015, and if Cataluña were to become independent, it would be law.

the former PAH spokesperson and the central political actor within *Barcelona en Comú*, the PAH has been cast in the light of the new politic. Yet at the time of research, the PAH refused to play the role of Ada Colau's foot soldiers.

This was clearly stated in an interview with a Brazilian reporter that I witnessed while attending the January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2015 student orientation meeting. The reporter was on assignment in Spain to write about the new European insurgent left parties (including Podemos and Greece's Syriza). He asked about the relationship between the PAH and the then-named Colau's party. Juan, the PAH member answered, "There is none. Ada Colau started here. Individual PAH members might support her, but not the PAH. The PAH is non-partisan, even though we are not apolitical."

Juan explained to the reporter that Ada is no longer the PAH's spokesperson though she still occasionally attends meetings. He says that he'll vote for her as an individual, but not as a PAH member. He thinks she'll govern Barcelona better than the current mayor. He does admit that Ada developed her "political charisma" through her work within the PAH, and in that way, there is an ongoing connection between the two groups. Utilizing *Barcelona en Comú's* talking points, when Juan is asked about the "new political parties" he says it's not a political party but rather a "citizen's platform."

I witnessed a large PAH Tuesday General Assembly on January 12 where both the ILP and the PAH's relationship to *Barcelona en Comú* was discussed. The conversation began with a discussion of the coming weekend's events, with June facilitating. They were discussing ILP signature gathering events, including a screening of a PAH documentary at a community event in leftist Sants neighborhood. "We need volunteers to do the set up and projection. We need to approach neighborhood presentations as an opportunity to nosh on food and chat. In Sants, you're going to collect a lot of signatures."

Mark chimes in, "The PAH needs to state our demands for this upcoming election. We know the elections are coming up with the new political parties. They say the new political parties speak for the PAH. PAH Vallecas (another PAH group near Barcelona)

says we need to make propositions to the parties. We spoke about making demands by occupying rental and owned properties. A Catalunya level PAH conversation is working on a public meeting to explain the PAH's demands, because the PAH is not itself a party."

Patti says, "What we want is this; if the *Partido Popular* wants to meet with us. We'll say hi and hit them in the face with our ILP Habitatge. But whatever. All the parties now say they support the PAH, but it doesn't mean anything. If we do this, if we meet with them, it'll be easy to mark them as liars and hypocrites."

An older woman asks, "Have the six points on the ILP Habitatge been translated online from Catalan to Castilian (standard) Spanish?"

With many small conversations occurring, there is commotion. A sense of political potential hangs in the room, along with distrust of institutional political processes. While a *Barcelona en Comú* victory might help the PAH, the Barcelona PAH has already been negatively impacted by the elections. It has impacted the group's recent organizational capacity, with many experienced activists in addition to Colau devoting attention to *Barcelona en Comú* rather than the PAH.

Mark says, "It's become difficult for the PAH. We don't want the parties to assume the PAH. They are not talking about the PAH if we stay quiet, they won't fight the banks just because we are an historic movement. If we get the parties to incorporate our needs in their platforms, it would strengthen the movement. It'd be a compromise of the parties towards the PAH, not the other way around." To this statement many people show agreement by raising their hands and wiggling their fingers. "It's important to either talk to no party or to all parties."

A woman wearing blue says, "On the municipal level, in the end, its local enough and perhaps possible to maintain accountability. But another doubt I have, based on my experience with parties, is what they say at public meetings and then how they compromise behind closed doors. The parties never have to ask how they want to

participate in our meetings. They simply assume the right to set the agenda. We have to ask ourselves what our minimum is in order to participate in any way within this institutional process.”

Ada Colau, who’d been sitting in the room, speaks up. She seems to be speaking as a PAH member as much as a political candidate.

“The parties appropriate you. My experience is that they’ve respected us (the PAH) from back in 2009. We’ve been demanding things of them, and I’ve never had any problem doing this. It gives force to the PAH. In many countries throughout history, movements have collectively made demands to governments on issues such as racial equality and the environment, and as a result, change has occurred. We should ask if they’ll make the change we demand in public so that they put their support for us on the table. This has public impact. The election is very important.”

A woman sitting next to me says below her breath as a threat to those parties that might not help, “Escraches.”

Another, “We need to have this debate.” At best, many think that whichever politician is in power, the PAH must hold their feet to the fire in order for any meaningful change to occur. “I don’t know what else can happen.”

A woman throws up her arms and says, “The political parties are going to use us, I don’t have anything else to say. This is my opinion.”

### **3m Cultural work for the informal sphere**

Ada Colau made no more statements during the meeting. Colau’s move from the PAH’s grassroots politics to mechanical party politics make sense in the light of the PAH’s effective horizon. My field research was concluded just as Colau’s party won the mayorship of Barcelona. Soon the ILP Habitatge would pass through the Catalan parliament but the PAH and *Barcelona en Comú* would find that its laws were

unenforceable, as expected, without passing through the National Parliament as the Catalan independence remained unclear. Thus, for some a long march through the institutions would begin and *Barcelona en Comú* and its allied municipal platforms would run for national office. A governing story could begin from here. While the national ILP addresses the one body that can definitively change Spanish law (the National Parliament), the Habitatge is directed towards the Catalan Parliament that does not have the legitimacy to enforce the agreement – though having passed it, they further normalize the PAH’s interests throughout Cataluña. Whether or not Colau as mayor and party leader, will be able to use the vertical mechanics of political power to change the situation of those affected by mortgages is yet to be seen.

I had the opportunity to attend a January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015 conversation of autonomous artists, writers and critics at the office of the *Enmedio Collective*. It was neither a PAH nor *Barcelona en Comú* get-together. It was a meeting for autonomous cultural workers, the purpose of which was to discuss the “role of radical critique today.” Here, “today” was understood not as some general contemporary, but rather the current political and cultural ferment of the city, country and its institutions. The conversation was staged to discuss the role criticism plays “1) on the symbolic level, 2) with respect to the materiality of existence 3) on the organizational level. In conclusion, we will address how a critical approach may proactively intervene in this current situation.” (*Jordana 2015*)

Those gathered at the meeting were writers, artists and academics who’d found themselves having to explain to their peers why they weren’t involved in *Barcelona en Comú* or *Podemos* whose energy was, at the time, explosive. Those present understood that despite possible opportunities, the new parties placed grassroots movements at risk. The first risk they identified was the drawdown of grassroots labor power. The second risk was the loss of cultural capital that had recently so energizing the grassroots. Other risks include the possibilities for a general disenchantment with activism and a possible powerful right-wing counter-offensive from below.

For those present, Ada Colau’s motives were beyond reproach, though the larger party

system she engages with was held with the same suspicion demonstrated at the PAH meeting. Rather than working in the interest of the new politics, these creatives were interested in continuing to support the informal sector. In this context, the informal sector was identified in two ways that were not explicitly differentiated – it was understood as the organizational project of and by people in need – for example of people in need of housing or food. “There is a war, a war of actual hunger, going on below the surface of everything that is going on at the markets, with people who are in actual need” said another meeting attendee. But it was also understood slightly differently – as shorthand for people with general need, including those involved in the conversation.

Those present understood themselves as possible relational agents whose cultural work could shape multitudinous sociality. Jara Rocha, the woman who invited me to this private conversation said, “How do we hold in suspension the individual in relation to the collective in our work? Suspend in two ways – putting relations in pause so there is solidarity without individual erasure, but also supporting the appearance of important things that highlight what must be related to? What forms have we replicated to affirmation of these social dispositifs, and what forms do we as cultural workers utilize to build bridges across different ways of relating?” In this time of change, Jara was positing that critical culture’s role was to sit beside those who would be left out of *whatever* transition and keep open their capacity to survive in the margins, but also to continue of further social innovation that would meaningfully address the most marginal of people’s concerns.

Ada Colau has gambled that a move from a common multitudinous body to the legal structures of the city and state would pay off for the marginal. She figures she can affect the changes she’d helped make appear as common-sense governance within the social body, but that has been resisted by the formal institutions of the state. Though she still attended PAH meetings at the time of research, by then she had left her grassroots practice. Her actions were understood as an operation of a different order.

Her “political charisma” was developed within the PAH – helping co-articulate its

interest across the social terrain. Now, upon *Barcelona en Comú*'s victory, she and all the residents of Barcelona would be able to see how that charisma might operate through another, much more symbolic, abstract and machine-like machine. Barcelona is officially governed by a council of 41 city councilors, through whom a mayor (elected by 21 councilors) forms a governing body of 5 lieutenant-mayors and 17 city councilors and an additional 5 unelected councilors. And then, they must work through departments, salaried employees, budgets, contracts, private contractors in order to effect regulations, financing, budgeting and much more to both make change and provide stability.

Rocha's comments regarding the multitude that remains other to governance stand in critical reflection to the common sense notion that Colau's political victory would translate into the immediate fulfillment of the margin's needs. Rocha's knows otherwise, and her comments further demonstrate an awareness that the multitude's relationality is always an ongoing project that is coordinated and scaffolded in intimate relation with other ongoing projects.

## Chapter 4

### An ontology of law-likely culture

The transposition of the PAH's ongoing social encounters into this study transfers the group's ongoing sociality into fixed cultural thought, ordered to help shape policy suggestions. Policy, by its nature, strives to relate to the already systemic. What is proper to the systemic is not the particularity of the objects it connects, but the general facts that the system enforces toward particular results. For this study, the cultural is understood as formalized ways and means of relating. In its objectification, the cultural becomes different than the social. The cultural are objects or subjects of systems that themselves are cultural in the sense that they have some sort of formal consistency. To use Silvia Wynter's term, when the social becomes cultural, it becomes more "law-likely". While the social (as defined by this study) remains multitudinously unaccountable and particular in its moments and places, culture's systemic nature begs for accountability. The social and cultural along with the biological and ecological play roles in both the niche<sup>261</sup> and regulatory structures that structure life's living.

The PAH's social forms serve within this study as a cultural model for socially relational practices in the time of climate change to the extent that they demonstrate ways that multitudinous sociality encounters and reworks its own social relations to governance and governmental failure. This chapter aims to articulate the actual ways of systematicity that organize the multitude in relation to culture and

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261 "Niche construction theory, on the other hand, focuses on the ways systems actively shape or construct their environment. In this view, the niche is not something that exists out there in nature waiting to be discovered or filled by an organism. Furthermore, constructed niches often persist longer than any of their individual inhabitants, which allow these niches to store important hereditary and regulatory information. Niche construction theory thus includes the notion of expanded and multiple inheritance systems (from genomic to ecological, social and cultural). This latter aspect has made the concept of niche construction especially attractive for theories of cultural evolution as it facilitates a more complex notion of inheritance and a closer link between evolutionary dynamics and learning." (Laubichler & Renn 2015 566)



governance in the world. The PAH in itself demonstrates the multitudinous capacity for social means “outside law” to address and reformulate law and demonstrates an actual moment where the tautological capacity of the multitude to govern itself with governance becomes more than tautological. Rather it becomes a surprising innovation.

Copernicus’s epochal breaching of the Heaven/Earth divide was only to be made possible during the Renaissance, first, in generic terms, by the revalorizing/reinvention of Latin-Christian medieval Europe’s *homo religiosus* Adamic fallen Man as *homo politicus*, a figure now self-governed by its/his reason, articulated as reasons of state... And he [God], as Copernicus was to centrally argue, as “the best and most systematic artisan of all,” would have had to have created the universe’s “world machine” according to rules that made it *law-likely* knowable by the human reason of those creatures for whose sake he had done so. (Sylvia Wynter 2015 15-16)

To have “law-likely” affects suggests that affects are nearly certain to occur through relations organized around them. Wynter describes how after the Copernican breach, Eurocentric conceptualizations for organizing life were to be divined from moral, ethical and scientific structures justified by their certifiable universality. As Hobbes demonstrates, social facts can be seen to coincide with natural facts whose ruling orders, like gravity, can be argued on the grounds of their universal nature. What can be conceptualized as ethics, morality and human and worldly ontologies exceed any Eurocentric conceptualizations of how, and for what, life is ordered. What Wynter’s term “law-likely” allows for is a de-mystification, beside terms like “lawless” and “like-law”, of the relative systematicity of any organized dispositif. That the multitude and its representative in this study, the PAH, relate to law and governance is the law of law. But human law de-mystified is variable to its core.

This chapter explains how governing systems function through natural-scientific, theological, legal, cultural and social ways, so as to recognize in what ways and how multitudinous activity occurs in relation to governance. A cross-disciplinary

approach is employed, utilizing literature from evolutionary biology, cognitive science, ecological and political history, anthropology, theology and art history. Following Silvia Wynter's suggestion, the culture for which this study intends to make policy is suspended in varying binds in nature, through culture and in conceptualizations of the nature/culture divide.

Philosopher of the brain Catherine Malabou (2017) makes clear the extent to which changes in governing law can deeply alter human practice across time. "Human practices alter or affect brain-body chemistry, and, in return, brain-body chemistry alters or affects human practices. Brain epigenetic power acts as a medium between its deep past and the environment." Malabou describe how brains with their human and cultural needs construct habits and then habitats with real historical impact to forward particular lines of cognitive and logistical development. "We can distinguish here between autotropic and allotropic psychotropic, that is, addictive substances and practices acting on the self, and addictive practices acting on the other political addictive practices. Among the former are 'coffee, sugar, chocolate, and tobacco', which first began circulating in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries." (47) Coffee may just be coffee, or, in a system, coffee can be much more. Malabou suggests that coffee structures different ways of working not only for coffee growers and producers, but also its consumers, whose increased concentration plays out in the terrestrial ecologies that collaborate in its production. If the PAH's practice can be understood as making a habitual break in capitalist relations, the systemic interests of this chapter must come to terms with how relational objects – the things of culture, like the "idea of the PAH" (and not the PAH itself) – transfers particular meaning within countervailing or other-interested systems. To understand this is to build a conceptual relation between anthropological-cultural and art-cultural thought.

This chapter serves to explain systemic ways of being in relation to any thing's being in itself; which is both tautological and antithetical. It is tautological because objects only relate in themselves systemically, it is antithetical because the nature of an

object is to be confined to its own being. The first section goes some way towards untangling this Chthulucenic knot, in which nature and culture lay on top of one-another, to form general human bio-social processes (that are not exclusively for humans), and to discussing how climate change affects all of this. The second section lays out the interested nature of human determinations of lawly governance, and justifications of force through climactic and governmental ends. It also establishes a qualitative notion for judgment in the interests of the multitude. The third section looks more deeply at the social and cultural besides the law-making biopolitical to suggest how systems come to dominate multitudinous potential through cultural forms. Through this comes the study's definition of policy. This section speculates on the operations of less-lawly sociality at the margins of law, where manifest governmental failure allows the multitudinous capacities of self-governance to more clearly emerge.

## **1 Science**

The blue marble: planet earth viewed from space can be seen as the outer limit of earthly systems. Or, at one more step's remove, the blue marble of the earth can be conceptualized as an objective fact rather than a living system – in the same way as when resting on a coffee table, a pebble or plant appears to be nothing other than impenetrably whole. While any planet can be recognized as an indivisible fact for itself, within the planetary one can also identify the countless places and niches it contains for things and systems integrated within. Interested in how terrestrial life participates in its own non-directional evolution that occurs as the Chthulucenic collaboration between species and environment, evolutionary biologists and historians of science Manfred Laubichler and Jürgen Renn (2015) state that from a certain perspective, ecologies and organisms are indistinguishable. Without objective knowledge of them, ecologies and organisms can appear, if apparent at all, as points within affiliated flows. Scientific distinctions made of planetary things must be understood as “process specific and also pragmatic.” (568) Distinctions are

always only made on behalf of interested parties.<sup>263</sup> Interested; in the way that if one purposefully points to a rock, one has a reason to do so.

In identifying how life's innovations can be meaningfully accounted for within the total environment, the pair nominate the ecological niche<sup>264</sup> as the site where particular relations between culture and nature are staged for any organism to encounter, to make due with and to make changes of scale and order. For humans, they conceptualize the niche as the point for particular life's exchanges with the many-scaled ecological and human regulatory/maintenance systems to which it must relate. The niche's biosocial nature is to be the particular and particularly constructed place where individuals make their homes. Socially and culturally, Renn and Laubichler build upon scaffolded niche theory developed by evolutionary biologist John Odling-Smee. Odling-Smee's (1988) ontological niche thesis builds from the fact that fully formed organisms and not just their genomes participate in the process of evolution. It is not just DNA that changes; fully cultural and fully social human beings change in time and space (that is, evolve). It is through the transformations of human habits and environments that also structure and provide for the habitual cultural forms that continue social life through particular ways. Odling-Smee's work suggests the naturalness of *whatever* creature to make a home in the world and in so doing transform and be transformed by the many relations their niche affords.

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263 To be clear and yet not to specifically undermine, their acknowledgement represents the theology of Western science, which ultimately suggests a secular, globally purposeless world.

264 "Niche construction theory... focuses on the ways systems actively shape or construct their environment. In this view, the niche is not something that exists out there in nature waiting to be discovered or filled by an organism. Furthermore, constructed niches often persist longer than any of their individual inhabitants, which allow these niches to store important hereditary and regulatory information. Niche construction theory thus includes the notion of expanded and multiple inheritance systems (from genomic to ecological, social and cultural). This latter aspect has made the concept of niche construction especially attractive for theories of cultural evolution as it facilitates a more complex notion of inheritance and a closer link between evolutionary dynamics and learning." (566.)

As architectures, niches are stores of times' accumulations; the facts of what they accumulate help account for the effects of particular inheritances as they provide place and manner for individualized process and localized learning – thus, for being in particular. Niches accumulate both objective things but also abstract ways of doing things. The niche is the site where by the facts of life and death, where the accounting for “the evolution of innovations within complex systems across scales” (566) must occur – as abstract innovation with no worldly manifestation has no being at all. The niche provides regulatory systems with cultural,<sup>265</sup> biological and organic matter to organize and to be organizational for – systems are termed “ecological” to the extent that they represent contextually situated total systems of exchange. The niche is the site where the fiction of the nature/culture divide is made real through the force of natural and narrated human law. Real or conceptually real, the contextual situation of the niche can be engineered by how it relates to varieties of scale; scales are variable and accessed as regulatory networks (567).

By Laubichler and Renn, exchange systems are termed “regulatory networks”, through them organisms sociologically, technically, culturally and biologically relate with things within and external to their niches.<sup>266</sup> These exchanges can be material, psychological, abstract: they are culturally made and mediated in the ways that one qualifies a relationship. Though the terrestrial world is almost totally ecological – that is, almost without unsystematized material, from the point of view of *whatever*

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265 Laubichler and Renn (567) identify both the social and the cultural as subsets of the confluence of the generally “behavioural” and “structural.”

266 “We, as others before... have identified the integration of regulatory network and niche construction perspectives as one challenge for extending evolutionary theory and suggest that this requires a model that brings together regulatory and niche elements within one network of interacting causal factors. While others have done this for some specific cases and within the conceptual structure of either evolutionary genetics (Linksvayer et al., 2012) or cultural evolution (Laland et al., 2008; Andersson et al., 2014) our proposed perspective aims to bring evolutionary processes at all levels into one conceptual framework.” (568).

niche, the relational regulatory systems can be entirely variable. Niches expand or contract, live or die by the regulation models they attend to (cf. Lévi-Strauss). The changing of *whatever* system brings certain elements within focus and makes certain things other to that system; that is, concepts become conceptually externalized and “not in the interests” of whoever. Regulatory networks, such as capitalism or calorie counting, change the focus of what can be internalized or externalized to the interests of the systems.<sup>267</sup> Calorie counting internalizes a focus on weight and externalizes fatty foods. Capitalism internalizes financial profits and externalizes environmental costs. Regardless of their externality, fat and environmental costs continue to variably exist.

Karola Stotz’s (2010) focuses niche theory on cognitive science’s extended mind thesis<sup>268</sup> that posits that all living organisms are defined by both “what is inside your head” (what the brain is and what it thinks about) and to what the mind is connected by way of the body’s capacities (483). The extended mind thesis suggests that people are psychically and thus really and systemically connected with physical, cultural, social and biosocial connections. The extended mind thesis provides a frame for understanding how that *whatever* that helps people connect in the world becomes part of the armature that makes their world intimately sensible (cf. Spinoza). By the definitional indeterminacy that Laubichler and Renn give to the scale of any one niche, evolutionary biology under discussion here uses niche theory to explain how life can be positioned within both particular and universal, abstract and real niches; and how the body and mind might connect to the conceptually particular and universal which variably provide for and regulate life.

*Whatever* object connects the multitude to the world; they orient connectivity but

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<sup>267</sup> “The niche for an internal network at one scale can be part of the internal network at another scale. Therefore, from the system’s perspective there are no absolute boundaries between an internal network and its environment.” (568).

<sup>268</sup> See Clark & Chalmers (1998).

do not define it. Definition ultimately remains independent of the capacity of whoever relates, even through acculturated and lawly determinations. Provision and regulation are understood as always-particular encounters with things to which one can related through other systems. Particular relational encounters can have many different ends: but to the extent that a peach on a table is desirable, it has some regulatory effects – in the sense that one must eat it with the mouth not the elbow, and that the process of getting more peaches suggests certain behavioral patterns to be repeated, or not.

In Laubichler and Renn's considerations of the indeterminacy of the niche's scale, the line between innovation and transformation is never quite clear.<sup>269</sup> Through time spent with the PAH, this study understands that the innovative particular and social can become general and cultural through a general transformation of common sense. To appreciate the systematicity of life on the blue marble is to understand that both systems that organize life, and life itself, are always in flux. Because humans have constructed their being on earth as historical, there is also a political dimension in the epistemological difference between recognizing transformation as either mere modulation or as systemic transformation. As a result, change in the human world happens for reasons that cannot be captured by simply referring to change as constant; the institutionality of systems makes change 'political'. Climate change is political partially because it suggests that some people's lives must change at the expense of others', even though variation is natural. Some of these politics are more thoroughly developed in this chapter's second section with the concept of the Katechon and the spectacle. What matters here is the simple fact that life and its niches are exposed to the wider world regardless of how the niche poses itself and narrates its relations to new developments.

This is because the particularities of climate have always already been scaffolded in

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<sup>269</sup> This sort of global translationality of particulars is common to systems theory beyond biology, see for example Luhmann (1977).

relation to the systematicity of life; when a climate can no longer sustain what is scaffolded within it, life's organization will change. When the water runs out, something must eventually happen. Renn and Laubichler (2014) describe how human knowledge is developed as an affect and object of humanity in specific relation to particular climactic qualities. For example, they highlight variable ecological conditions that favor, in particular cases, the development of cooperative foraging and elsewhere collaborative hunting habits (8) and elsewhere sedentary cultivation (11). With an understanding that climates change beside other things, one does well to consider the possibility that in their time these socio-cultural developments may also have been painful political adjustments to those who experienced them most keenly.

Needs contingent to a species' biology are relatively rigid; it is law-like that blood must circulate through the body – if not, death follows. Likewise, it seems to be a law of our nature that oxygen must be inhaled. It seems law-like that if appropriate water, food and shelter are not secured, creatures meet their ends. Science has made gains at tending the margins of such rules, still the need to eat and drink is a rule. Yet, beyond and with these rules, Laubichler and Renn highlight that the niche and its attendant cross-scaled relations allow for a temporary decoupling from 'nature'. That is, by setting up life's relations in particular ways, life seems to cheat against its own biology and the world's pre-existing ecologies. Decoupling builds resource cushions into living systems that bring more to bear in life than what a gene or phenotype might express; inheritances, archives and warehouses, learned and structured behavior and more. Niches allow for particular continuations of species over time (568–569). Importantly, the niche demonstrates the home where the biological and social eminently mix to afford living in and beyond the moment. As Wynter (2015) and Ferreira da Silva (2015) point out, besides the rigidity of genetics and biology, a variety of existential strategies can be organized through social and cultural arrangements. Even death itself can be socio-culturally qualified through questions like, 'what constitutes the good life?', and 'what is a good way to die?'



Furthering Odling-Smee's formulations on the niche's juncture as mind, language and culture, Kim Sterelny (2012) ventures to hypothesize how human language co-evolved with humanity rather than being genetically coded by some cranium-based universal grammar. Rather than born in a fixed relationship between brain, tongue and the ear, Sterelny posits that grammar developed from gestural sign language based upon the miming of daily human activities. Mirroring Wynter's and Malabou's thoughts at the beginning of this chapter, cognitive scientist Chris Sinha (2015) pointedly states that, "Rather than seeing cultural evolution as 'taking off' from a terminal point of biological evolution, we should rather see evolutionary biological processes as having been 'captured' by an emergent cultural process, with ontogenetic processes (especially those involving representation, symbolization and communication) as a crucial catalyst and product of the co-evolution of culture and biology." (1) With John Searle's notion of concrete abstract facts<sup>270</sup>, Sinha firmly recognizes the grounds that human cultural arrangements provide for further bio-social development.

The fine, narrational difference between the cultural and the social merits attention; in this study's definition, the social is more forgiving than the cultural. In general, and in relation to the multitude, the cultural is far more law-likely than the social. The more law-likely something is, the greater the punishment there is for disobedience. As Chapter 2 outlined, and as the second section of this chapter discusses, the cultural in what fine art models or what anthropology defines, appears in Western thought as rigidly regulated (with the anthropological providing definitional structures for how people are or need not be) or softly managerial (by

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270 For his part, Searle describes how language, cultural processes, and objects buoy social facts things that may have no identifiable physical correlate but nevertheless operate as collective references. "There are things that exist only because we believe them to exist. I am thinking of things like money, property, government, and marriages ... [such] Institutional facts are so called because they depend upon human institutions for their existence." (1995 1).

fine arts productions to which the multitude must somehow relate). The social as described in Chapter 3's focus on the PAH; here it is understood as the register of actually interpersonal exchanges folded within and/or over or against and upon culture's formalized relationality. The social is the register of the multitude at its most multitudinous. Both biological necessity and cultural manner have real worldly effects: to politically untangle them from what is internally driven habit, individual ambition, desire and activity from externally regulated enforcement is to untangle the fact that all organisms are fated to die in some way, but that the death that was experienced was not the one that was desired or meant to be. Political activity aims in this world aims to particularly organize life in advance of common death, regardless.

Given within the social and cultural is the capacity for all humans to have some way of controlling how they die... if only in the emotional register each breathes their last breath. In the time of the climactic unraveling of what once seemed solid, this question steps forward in relation to what sort of existential meanings are socio-culturally organized in spite of or against the law-likeness of either particular or general structural collapse. This question, further detailed in this chapter's third section, relates to a recognition of the multitude's blind ability to socially act or dream regardless of what appears as law, or as structural and biological need. One recognizes, then, that biology and culture are intermingled, in the most formal of ways, and that sociality finds ways against laws of nature.

For Theodor Adorno, the interaction between the cultural and the social occurred in the following way through art(1970/1997):

The shaft that art directs at society is itself social; it is counter pressure to the force exerted by the body social; like inner-aesthetic progress, which is progress in productive and, above all, technical forces, this counter pressure is bound up with progress of extra-aesthetic productive forces. There are historical moments in which forces of production emancipated in art represent a real emancipation that is impeded by the relations of

production. Artworks organized by the subject are capable *tant bien que mal* of what a society not organized by a subject does not allow; city planning necessarily lags far behind the planning of a major, purposeless, artwork. (42)

### **1a The entanglements of the bio-social**

It should be clear, following this brief discussion of biology, culture, language and meaning, that in light of several things of interest to this study (including the PAH's anti-capitalist interests, the post-Fordist valuation of the cultural sphere and capitalism's ability to dispossess or vitalize particular lives) that humans' capacity for abstraction is historically distinguishable from capitalism and finance.

Abstraction is not an innovation invented by banking or finance. Human thought and thought's translation across space by acts of language, imagination and representation occur without so much regard to financial infrastructure. As mentioned in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, abstraction is the result of intense focus and also facilitates cross-community communication. The ancient regulatory/systemic, archeological and architectural remains of societies are the results of abstract activities that do not remain but nevertheless can be inferred from what is left. As Renn & Laubichler (2014) explain:

Knowledge is, as mentioned above, encoded experience. Based on experience, it is, at the same time, the capacity of an individual, a group or a society to solve problems and to anticipate appropriate actions. In short, knowledge is a problem-solving potential. But it is not just a mental structure. It also involves material and social dimensions that play a crucial role in determining what actions are possible and legitimate in a given historical situation. Knowledge may be shared within a group or a society. Material artifacts such as instruments or texts may be used in learning processes organized by societal institutions, allowing individuals to appropriate the shared knowledge. (4).

The relative law-likeness of knowledge or art does not imply an inherent

'truthness'. The truth of any object is relative and subjective. The multitude relates to contingency, contingently. Otherwise, there would be no multitude, only useless law and one normative behavior. Definitions sit independently from *whatever* phenomenon they seek to describe. In relation to certain Marxist and other radical ontologies, Dipesh Chakrabarty (2009) is troubled by how the concept of the Anthropocene may make Hegelian or Marxist universal human projects seem performatively necessary with the notion of the climate crisis. Chakrabarty problematizes the conceptual utility of Enlightenment tools to think through responses to the changing climate, observing how readymade frameworks<sup>279</sup> that claim to develop radical developments face variability from directions that exceed traditional Western accounting and Enlightenment reason.<sup>280</sup> Kant and Hegel did not consider the climate as the unstable variable it actually is. Chakrabarty states, "the industrial way of life has acted much like the rabbit hole in Alice's story; we have slid into a state of things that forces on us a recognition of some of the parametric (that is, boundary) conditions for the existence of institutions central to our idea of modernity and the meanings we derive from them." (217) In terms of the parametric, Chakrabarty looks towards similar ecological conditions as Laubichler and Renn have identified, with regards the ways in which particularly stable climactic conditions allowed for the foundational practice of contemporary humanity (e.g. agriculture or state practice). He recognizes how temperatures and geologies were rarely considered because they seem so solid, and that their apparent stability allowed for particular socio-cultural arrangements to develop over very long periods of time. By their means, scope and scale these relations are

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279 "As the crisis gathered momentum in the last few years, I realized that all my readings in theories of globalization, Marxist analysis of capital, subaltern studies, and postcolonial criticism over the last twenty-five years, while enormously useful in studying globalization, had not really prepared me for making sense of this planetary conjuncture within which humanity finds itself today." (2009 199).

280 "[T]he current crisis has brought into view certain other conditions for the existence of life in the human form that have no intrinsic connection to the logics of capitalist, nationalist, or socialist identities." (217).

simply “independent of capitalism or socialism.” (218) He points out that so many of the violent conditions caused by climate change; ocean acidification, temperature rise, the destruction of food chains, will happen regardless of anyone’s political position. Their affects will be felt by people and creatures whose political position will never be heard, even if their voices are human.

In this way, the less law-like capacities of individual consciousness, sociality, culture, and biology run multitudinous around those more law-like capacities of the geological, climatological, biological, cultural and social. To think through the multitudinous possibilities of human relationality, this study returns to writing on art and anthropology among other things, as they stand to be generally propositional to the capacities of human sociality. Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin’s *Art in the Anthropocene* (2015) begins with a question about art, and how it can respond to the world “going to pieces” (9). Their introduction discusses how thinking in strictly economic terms limits human capacities to actually acknowledge the depth of human/non-human entanglement in the world:

In a move to think through the entangled relations that might better describe our present moment, Haraway proposes the Chthulucene, “after the diverse earth-wide tentacular powers and forces and collecting things with names like Naga, Gaia, Tangaro (burst from water-full Papa), Terra, Haniyasu-hime, Spider Woman, Pachamama, Oya, Gorgo, Raven, A’akuluujjusi, and many, many more”... Although the names Eurocene, Technocene, Capitalocene and Plantationocene are necessary political interventions to draw attention to the origins of our current planetary situation, do we really want the epoch to be named as such for the next 10,000 years? Isn’t there a necessity to think with geology and biology, with the power of imagining all that might take place, rather than condemning our descendants to live in a world perpetually marked by the events of a few hundred years? As Bruno Latour suggests in this volume, perhaps the best way to fight capitalism is not to grant it this kind of enduring power, but to instead take a deflationary approach. As Latour

remarks, “Let’s limit the number of things that you can attribute to capitalism and let’s distribute them and see what’s actually happening.”  
(9)

A flexibility afforded by general human sociality that is channeled through more structured cultural arrangements remains a given at the window of the anthropocenic undoing of long-stable slow relationality between the ecological earth and its inhabitants. This study’s impetus to critique and step away from capitalism is based on an awareness of the environmental and psychological costs of the economic, military, political, philosophical and theological systems attendant to Euro-American governance. Capitalism demands inhumane interpersonal relationships from and between people. Sustaining these behaviors and extending their debts continues more of the same, but with more violent means to bring nature and the multitude to heel. Wanting certain Western capitalist ontologies to diminish in favor of others is not the same as a desire to watch things crumble, or to produce something conceptually different for difference’s sake. Rather, by looking towards other ways with retrospection and experimentation, one gains a greater appreciation of what relationality can achieve when freed from the strictures of capitalist accountancy and law.

Existent cultural knowledge at the margins and other to Western thought provides hints as to how the human multitude has collaboratively governed itself seemingly to afford the stability of the Holocene. In Davis and Turpin’s book, Mohawk artist and Environmental Studies scholar Laura Hall describes how she understands the contingencies of her people’s creativity; according to Hall, “Indigenous aesthetics are rooted in culture and community, with the enmeshed responsibilities of living well in the ecologies of our ancestors.” (282). Métis artist Zoe Todd (2015) discusses Indigenous Studies scholar Vanessa Watts in a manner that complements Hall, stating that “Place-Thought is based upon the premise that land is alive and thinking, and that humans and non-humans derive agency through the extensions of these thoughts.” (245-246). In her own works, Watts (2013) has described how Western

legal practices gained power by shaming indigenous actors in treaties, making them feel foolish for considering the voices of non-human actors within indigenous legal agreements.<sup>281</sup>

A general conception of the global multitude considers the entire anthropology of governmental forms in relation to which that multitude may have or might possibly govern itself. This consideration of possible anthropologies is not evoked for revisionist purposes; we cannot simply rewind the ecological destruction capitalism has caused by “playing primitive”. We cannot recreate other ways of being in the world as though life were a work of performance art. The multitude sets itself in *whatever* relation to things that themselves are formed in larger historical, archeological and environmental accumulations. Nevertheless, by looking to the work of indigenous scholars such as Hall, Todd, and Watts, one can imagine different ways for human self-governance to become contingent on other relations, and through different object-oriented routes. For example, Hall highlights how being in conscious relation with beings that are other-than-human organizes different ethical horizons.

This study has embraced Spinoza’s worldly ontology, but it also recognizes a need to be attendant to the real effects that Hegelian thought has organized. This section has further enriched this ontological vision by demonstrating how sciences conceptualize ontological and epistemological bindings of nature and culture in abstract procedures to describe how the capacities for life are scaffolded together upon layers of littoral history. It has also glimpsed at how other cultures have conceptualized these nature/culture relations. The following sections further investigate how law and law-likely cultural structures built upon and transversally

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281 Introducing her article, Watts (2013 20) succinctly summarizes, “that agency has erroneously become exclusive to humans, thereby removing non-human agency from what constitutes a society. This is accomplished in part by mythologizing Indigenous origin stories and separating out communication, treaty-making, and historical agreements that human beings held with the animal world, the sky world, the spirit world, etc.”

connected to real and virtual objects and things to collaborate in the organization of life; as governing regimes bound by capitalist economy, bolstered by law and violent force. Law and law-likely regimes occupy the gap between the epistemological and the actual that is also occupied with multitudinous activity; because what is said to be is often not what must be nor what actually happens, even if it appears or is forced to be otherwise. Cultural and social life exceeds itself, especially in the expressive instant – the material organized through scaffolded relations makes possible expressions that appear to escape *whatever* logic. (cf. Bataille 1989, Guattari 1995) In many ways, all life and its living continues to exceed itself, despite the awareness of the difficulties that the changing climate brings, and despite fears of death.

## **2 Life, law, governance and death**

The living organism, in a situation determined by the play of energy on the surface of the globe, ordinarily receives more energy than is necessary for maintaining life; the excess energy (wealth) can be used for the growth of a system (e.g. an organism); if the system can no longer grow, or if the excess cannot be completely absorbed in its growth, it must necessarily be lost without profit; it must be spent, willingly or not, gloriously or catastrophically. (Bataille 1949/ 1989 21)

Each human, with hunger nourished and thirst quenched, possesses more energy than is necessary to contain life. Life exceeds itself. The daily nourishment globally consumed as food pushes back the apocalyptic clock that ticks for the conceptual possibility of mass starvation. Many objects in the world provide real, relational or ideational nourishment for life, meeting the interests if not the particularities of biological and social need. Humans gain a temporary immunity from death by engaging in systems that both constrain their horizons by seeming to meet need within limited frames, while also maintaining the possibility that those horizons may expand with the possibility for more sustainance. Within niches, the objects



that directly or indirectly provide for human need are the objects around which humans individually and collectively pass their time, and perhaps also think through the reorienting of their future activities.

Human and non-human life has what can be called a vitality to it, though life is bound by laws of physics, chemistry, biology, nature and its own inter- and intra-species organizationality. The bursting forth of life in springtime is a wonder to behold. Beyond the absolute bare minimum of existence at death's door, each life overflows with potential and effort – a fact that confronts the concept of human animal life posited in varying ways by Aristotle, Hobbes and Hegel. All three of these philosophers draw distinctions between simple human beings and those beings closest to the interests of law and order. Aristotle describes a human species as enriched by a distinctly human spirit whose capacity for expression is the task of those that fate has cast in the role of society's rulers. Hobbes' sovereign right demonstrates the ethic of law that tumbles down from sword and scepter to ensure a nation and nature's orderly progression. Hegel's philosophy gives to all men the capacity for betterment, defined through a culture attendant to Western law and order that reaches into all men's souls.

All three conceptualizations posit a way for the human being to stand independently from being human – in ways that manifest over time as civilizational, national and cultural expression. These structures are constructed on the backs of others within and beyond their societies who, by the force of relationality (through marriage, debt, property right, threat of or actual use of force, law and also through the simple fact that people relate), come to appear less than the interested individuals who organize or benefit from these ideal forms and orders. In the philosophical West, but also elsewhere, people are biopolitically inculcated –through law and order, culture and tradition, need and the ways of working in society and at home – into processes that separate them from their individual capacities and worldly possibilities, and at the same time connected to the apparently greater potential of *whatever* human

organizationality.<sup>285</sup>

## 2a Law and myth

Upon Aristotelian, Hobbesian, Hegelian and other epistemological terrains, the nature/culture division in particular is buttressed in order to facilitate the scaffolding of Western organizationality.<sup>286</sup> In the light of those seated most clearly by these human laws, all others to varying degrees can be conceptualized as beside or beyond (cultural or actual) law. These others who racially, culturally, sexually, economically, specially, geographically (etc.) are beside or beyond: their lives have been qualified according to Western philosophy as “simple”, “animal” or “bare”. Agamben (1998) summarizes one way in which others are conceptualized as simple and natural, and as such confined: “simple natural life is excluded from the *polis* in the strict sense, and remains confined – as merely reproductive life – to the sphere of the *oikos*, ‘home.’” (9). Following Aristotle’s terminology, Agamben identifies the division of simple (*zoe*) from meaningful (*bios*) life as the beginning of sovereign, juridico-institutional and biopolitical logics (11). This is the making of a specifically human law of things, the identification of an apparent space for a political ontology to utilize so-called natural forces organized thusly for “human interests” beside, but not removed from, the laws and effects of such natural forces. Anthropocentrically determined laws work by modeling how humanity should be – against the multitudinous ways that humans are and do actually relate. The laws’ enforcements are the same but also qualifiedly different from how nature already enforces itself: exposure, isolation, hunger, thirst, violence and the threat of death can be enacted by either nature or by people in nature.<sup>287</sup>

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285 This space between individual potential and collective capacity is what Marx (2009) defines as the space of alienation and estrangement. For Hegel (1977) this gap dynamic is expressed as the dialectic between individual interest and masterly law.

286 Let there be a footnote to acknowledge that other myths have organized other systems differently throughout human history.

287 The experience of force defines similarity between the violence of a mortgage crisis and a flood.

Referencing the infamous Nazi jurist and noted legal scholar Carl Schmitt, Agamben identifies sovereign law as always contextually established, as determined by a sovereign actor<sup>288</sup> whose founding activity is outside the law.<sup>289</sup> At the heart of law is the lawless act undertaken by a conquering power that determines subsequent legal orders of things against *whatever* pre-existing order.<sup>290</sup> Law, for Schmitt (2006), begins with very particular founding mythologies about land – in his telling – from cultures grounded in Eurasian farming techniques. Indeed this myth establishes an ontology linking nature and the forces of law and governance.

First, the fertile earth contains within herself, within the womb of her fecundity, an inner measure, because human toil and trouble, human planting and cultivation of the fruitful earth is rewarded justly by her with growth and harvest. Every farmer knows the inner measure of this justice.

Second, soil that is cleared and worked by human hands manifests firm lines, whereby definite divisions become apparent. Through the demarcation of fields, pastures, and forests, these lines are engraved and embedded. (42)

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288 Agamben (1998) states, “For what is at issue in the sovereign exception is, according to Schmitt, the very condition of possibility of juridical rule and, along with it, the very meaning of State authority.” (18)

289 This also goes for what can be named “natural laws” – in that the events of nature occur in advance of their recognition and naming by interested parties.

290 Agamben (1998 17) quotes Schmitt: “There is no rule that is applicable to chaos. Order must be established for juridical order to make sense. A regular situation must be created, and sovereign is he who definitely decides if this situation is actually effective. All law is ‘situational law.’”

Schmitt's *Nomos of the Earth* is a partisan history of Eurocentric international law that sets the terms for the post-World War II American global order. Schmitt is brutally clear that law is based on the justifications and divisions of the spoils of conquest, as extended over time.<sup>291</sup> He is also clear about his mythological allegiances<sup>292</sup> to the political meanings of Roman Christendom. (57–62) These meanings provide governmental justification for much of the results of competing European legal claims spilling out over the annals of human history. An embrace of myth such as Schmitt's represents a law-likely establishment of common sense, of the socialization of the cultural for particular governmental ends. In order to explain the law, Schmitt naturalizes the birth of governance, as conceived on Christian land for specific human use: "the earth is bound to law in three ways. She contains law within herself, as a reward of labor; she manifests law upon herself, as fixed boundaries; and she sustains law above herself, as a sign of public order. Law is bound to the earth and related to the earth." (42)

All variation that stands in and as questions against this (or any) law are multitude. In the event of animal or bare life, the multitude's being is superfluous to his patriarchal and given (by his own judgment) legal order. The ethic of law and the brutality it distributes as clearly delineated common sense, enforceable by state and interested private actors is what is of interest for the cultural policy of the

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291 "In every case, land-appropriation, both internally and externally, is the primary legal title that underlies all subsequent law." (Schmitt 2006 46)

292 In the introduction to *Nomos*, Schmitt gives thanks to geographer and geo-strategist Halford John Mackinder –likely because of Mackinder's joining together of a global political view with a materialist view of the way in which the territorial distribution of fertile land drives history. In his brief introductory comment, Schmitt (2006 7–38) thanks Mackinder's reasoning, then makes his mythological exception: "I am much indebted to geographers, most of all to Mackinder. Nevertheless, a juridical way of thinking is far different from geography. Jurists have not learned their science of matter and soil, reality and territoriality from geographers. The concept of sea appropriation has the stamp of a jurist not a geopolitician... The ties to mythological sources of jurisprudential thinking are much deeper than those to geography."

multitudes. Despite Schmitt's clear and ethical admissions, it must be remembered that the author of these statements made legal cover for the Nazi regime. All law is backed up by some brutality. This study has no specific interest in Schmitt's legal thought other than how it might transparently reveal Western law's affects. Law is the binding of interested human judgment (governance that he names as myth) besides forceful geo-bio-social entanglements (in this instance state, police, property, work and distribution networks). Law is written upon some activity that happened in advance of law (Schmitt names this an act of theft or appropriation). Laws are the enforceable mythologizations of some body's sovereign sense of things. Law is cultural.

As culture has law-likely affects, this study understands that a cultural policy of the multitude collaborates in the production of law-likely objects in relation to which the multitude may govern itself. Recognizing Schmitt, Agamben (1998) identifies the power of making law from its grounding in lawlessness as the "sovereign exception". "In this sense, the sovereign exception is the fundamental localization (*Ortung*), which does not limit itself to distinguishing what is inside from what is outside but instead traces a threshold (the state of exception) between the two..." The power of law is its enforceability, or its continued and interested enforcement based upon distinctions it makes between its own activity (whether actually lawful or not) and all others who must, against some threat of force remain on its good side. Law's nature is both rigid (as law) and permeable (as founded upon no law) in relation to the fluidity of life; as law it extends itself seamlessly over or into *whatever* variable situation. This is law's own unaccountable sociality. Its lawfully lawless operation is what allows it to stand, "on the basis of which outside and inside, the normal situation and chaos, enter into those complex topological relations that make the validity of the juridical order possible." (9) Here, it is useful to be reminded of Fanon's existential self-alienation under Western law, and acknowledge that there will be populations outside of *whatever* law or culture. The validation of law's juridical order is not merely in court, but also within the intimate realm of social life and thought where it may or may not provide definitional logics that organize daily

sociality as common sense that harkens back to law's originary appropriations and theft.

Against bare life<sup>293</sup> speculation, Black Studies scholar Alexander Weheliye (2014) proposes an understanding of being that refuses definitions of a life impoverished in relation to that which is sovereign.

The particular assemblage of humanity under purview here is *habeas viscus*, which, in contrast to bare life, insists on the importance of miniscule movements, glimmers of hope, scraps of food, the interrupted dreams of freedom found in those spaces deemed devoid of full human life (Guantanamo Bay, internment camps, maximum security prisons, Indian reservations, concentration camps, slave plantations, or colonial outposts, for instance). Beyond the dominion of the law, biopolitics, and bare life they represent alternative critical, political, and poetic assemblages that are often hushed in these debates. (16)

For Agamben, a danger of conceptualizing power with concepts like bare life is that under such law the sovereign power finds ways to organize the multitudinous world to the exclusion of multitudinous interests.<sup>294</sup> Different in voice and tone than the territories given to law and bare life law that Agamben describes in *Homo Sacer*, the realm he describes in the *Coming Community* (1993) appears enchanted by metaphysical thought that weaves possibilities for transformation. As discussed in

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293 "Nevertheless, until a completely new politics – that is, a politics no longer founded on the *exception* of bare life – is at hand, every theory and every praxis will remain imprisoned and immobile, and the 'beautiful day' of life will be given citizenship only either through blood and death or in the perfect senselessness to which the society of the spectacle condemns it." (Agamben 1998 13)

294 "It can even be said that the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power." (Agamben 1998 11)

Chapter 1, *whatever* stands regardless of how law relationally connects *whatever* thoughts to singular universal nominations. For Agamben, the good of words are that they innately reveal paths to all knowledge, rather than to final thought or to data points. Words, by their nature bridge the particularities of utterance with the universal potential for translation and understanding. Thus, Debord's "spectacular phantasmagoria" (79) speaks to the law-likely risk that a word "be separated from what it reveals and acquire an autonomous consistency. Revealed and manifested (and hence common and shareable) being is separated from the thing revealed and stands between it and humans." (81). The phantasmagoria is that *whatever's* meaning has been affectively impoverished by the law-likely demands of capitalist relation, occluding actual relationality in favor of the spectacle's profit.

*Whatever* things appear as singular, not Chthulucenic. Bridging law, language, and its enforcement by state and interested private actors; this is how law-likely culture, today attendant to capitalism, organizes and scaffolds nature within the seemingly human realm. The nature/culture divide that law describes is straddled by both law and the other, but in different ways. The other conforms to law or fails and remains in the eyes of the law as animal or as simply human, expendable. Whereas the law straddles the world that is both human and nature and makes of it what it will. The ultimate achievement of the spectacle is that it can "now manipulate collective perception and take control of social memory and social communication, transforming them into a single spectacular commodity where everything can be called into question except the spectacle itself, which, as such, says nothing but, 'What appears is good, what is good appears.'" (80) In that way, though the multitude always only exists in governmental relation to itself through the objects it creates, this contemporary state stands as an inverse of the ideal of the multitude managing its affairs. This is because of how, through post-Fordism, lawly and law-likely finance, regulation, and the spectacle of cultural and social being (backed up by the police and the military) objectively stand to dispossess the human sociality that would be the multitude in actual governmental self-relation. Rather than being for itself, social relations contingent to capital oblige governing myth in the production

of something spectacularly, if only slightly, different.

## **2b Governance and end times**

In the time of dominant capitalism, the fallacy of Malthusian thought is exposed by the scales for life that human organizationality has constructed. Human organizationality is able to accommodate its own life. Nevertheless, through the nature of ecology, economy, political economy, history etc., much of human organizationality is precariously positioned in collaboration with law and the world to hold life in particular ways, to restrictively afford for certain outcomes. This is the “rabbit hole” that Chakrabarty identifies. A commonly expressed outcome of human arrangements as we know them is profit (for the few); another is for the multitude’s continued subjugation and treatment as expendable. In this way, the multitude is outside of law but subject to it. In terms of actual systematicity and political ecology, the rapid and violent collapse of earthly systems would likely be catastrophic, especially for the poor.<sup>312</sup> Regardless of law, life right now depends on what is ordered right now. As the Paris Climate Agreement (and its governing critics in the United States) demonstrates, capitalism and the current order find governmental justification for their lawful continuance within this bind. To expand upon this point, as well as the previous chapter’s discussion via Aristotle of the differences between leadership and governance, it is instructive to look now to the nature of the difference between law and governance according to the following comments made by philosopher Roberto Esposito (2011):

The monarch is both the whole and the part, the body and its head, his body and all the bodies that are part of it in the form of limbs, like the frontispiece image of the first English edition of *Leviathan*: a macrobody formed by the interconnection of many bodies fitted together like plated armor. A body made immortal by the sum, or product, of infinite mortality; an order made to endure by the sacrifice of all those who are at the same time both its subjects and subjugated by it. (71)

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312 See, for example, Brown (2007), IPCC (2014).



That which subjugates the multitudinous body is law governed over by a head in its exceptionality and exclusivity to others. Nevertheless, bound to the nature of the world, the head is just a part of the body. On the theological nature of such governmental relations, Esposito writes, “This is how political theology accomplishes and perfects the ancient function of the *katechon*: by including the principle of exclusion or by normalizing the exception.” (71) The *katechon* – the force that holds back the apocalypse<sup>313</sup> – is a useful way to think through the governmental justifications for its own existence, and in the time of climate change. Governance here is the space between laws and their application, and is necessary so that the system doesn’t bring its own downfall. It is a historic conceptualization, and thus Schmitt (2006) points towards the historic claims made by early theologians and rulers that the European order is *katechonic*, by highlighting how the European legal system was conceptualized for the maintenance of Christian governmental promises<sup>314</sup> and a particular social stability rather than for the production of grounds for its own end-times.

Consistent with this concept of the European Christian tradition’s anointed nature of rightly governance is the notion of secular governance; that while leaders might work under or towards godly order, they serve in a worldly manner. This dualism is of a piece with the nature/culture division, the distinctions between *zoe* and *bios*

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313 “[T]he *katechon* restrains evil by containing it, by keeping it, by holding it within itself. It confronts evil, but from within, by hosting it and welcoming it, to the point of binding its own necessity to the presence of evil.” (Esposito 2011 63)

314 Schmitt (2006 59) begins his chapter on governing concepts in relation to the *Katechon* thusly: “The unity of this *respublica Christiana* had its adequate succession of order in imperium [empire] and sacerdotium [priesthood]; its visible agents, in emperor and pope. The attachment to Rome signified a continuation of ancient orientations adopted by the Christian faith. The history of the Middle Ages is thus the history of a struggle for, not against Rome. The constitution of the army of the march to Rome was that of the German monarchy. The continuity that bound medieval international law to the Roman Empire was found not in norms and general ideas, but in the concrete orientation to Rome.”

that allow for both common unqualified life and a proper way of being that need not be common property. The political functionality of this mode of governance is that it obfuscates actual mundane behaviors, mundane and gross interests, behind a veil of anthro-theological thought that is openly revealed as both meaningless and very important.<sup>315</sup>

Secularity provides a contemporary concept for governance – that is, Christianity generalizes a book of laws by which all people, rather than just a chosen people<sup>316</sup> should be governed. Governed, and also judged. Besides allowing for the revelation of concepts for governmental (rather than theological) idealism, secularity makes political certain forms of human behavior while allowing other forms to just appear as debates around common sense. Regardless of the fact that these differences are being drawn over one body. Within secularity and the spectacle, the fact of death is transformed from a mystery to be cared for, to become just another fact of life.<sup>317</sup>

Aiming to conceptualize something different, Agamben (2005) describes distinctions between law of the Roman era and since, and prelaw that came before, as the “prejuridical sphere in which magic, religion, and law are absolutely

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315 Agamben reminds readers that the Schmittian thesis on political theology is “the most meaningful concepts of the modern doctrine of the State are secularized theological concepts.” (118)

316 This is first in reference to the Jewish Torah becoming a text common to all peoples of the Christian world. Then it is in reference to constitutions and written legal codes for general populations and modern states.

317 On the loss of the grip that death once had over life, Foucault (2003 248) writes, “Now that power is decreasingly the power to the right to take life, and increasingly the right to intervene to make live, or once power begins to intervene mainly at this level in order to improve life by eliminating accidents, the random element and deficiencies, death becomes, insofar as it is the end of life, the term, the limit, or the end of power too... And to that extent, it is only natural that death should now be privatized, and should become the most private thing of all.”

See also, Plessner (1958).

indiscernible from one another” (114). In relation to this distinction between law and prelaw and the head and the body, it is tempting to think that prelaw describes the terrain of the multitude in self-governance, where common human relationality to both natural and human-natural law acts in self-governance rather than by, with and through governmental order. It is also tempting to see this state of prelaw as sharing some qualities with both the biblical times of the Second Coming or the time of the universal Spirit.<sup>318</sup>

It is tempting to see prelaw as the inversion of the spectacle, or as the proper state for the multitude in ecological relation to its own being as self-governance. Yet, one of several reasons for hesitation before this thought concerns the inversion’s consistency with the philosophical ends of dialectical social imaginaries. Moreover, Agamben’s description of this state law is in relation to messianic and apocalyptic fears of Western history; in relation to final and mysterious ends. Roman law and governing structures that develop and are continued after the fall of Rome are conceptualized as the *katechon*, holding back *whatever* forces that came before and will come after. “The *katechon* is therefore the force – the Roman Empire as well as every constituted authority – that clashes with and hides katargesis [end times], the state of tangential lawlessness that characterizes the messianic, and in this sense delays unveiling the ‘mystery of lawlessness.’ The unveiling of this mystery entails bringing to light the inoperativity of the law and the substantial illegitimacy of each and every power in messianic time.” (111) In messianic times, the self-interests of each being are revealed, and either left aside so that the lion can lay down with the lamb, or allowed to take on a force of their own. Within Judeo-Christian traditions, end-times and the apocalypse fall, eschatologically, into the territory of the Final Judgment – a familiar affective territory for climate change fears.

Yet the apocalypse is only the last chapter of a book. Existence in the so-called mystery of lawlessness is a constant throughout history for anyone standing beside

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318 In the Hegelian sense.

and beyond any government's good graces. Since the beginning of time, people (the multitude) have existed under the thumb of governance and outside of law's protection. The ecological and eco-social trauma of the Columbian experience represents, for example, 500 years of two continents' populations outliving their supposed demise. Insofar as humanity and others live in ways that precede and exceed this severely limited frame of judgment, humanity is not to be simply judged through a reversal of Eurocentric and Judeo-Christian order. The order of human behavior and sociality in the world is more complex than simple dialectic moves between the ideal and the fallen.

### **2c Force, judgment and particular judgment**

Whoever, like Weheliye, encounters a life with their agency always already surrendered to the state or that exists irretrievably beyond the laws of men, has existed outside of the law. Nevertheless, life is written throughout with thought and expression that steels against any apparent state of affairs towards what comes next – in latent relation to incalculable pasts and multitudinously imaginable future historicals.<sup>319</sup> Everyone and everything's life is just in relation to its ends and to its continuing existence – even though both means and ends are subject to judgment, which comes from every direction. In the praxis of life wherever lived is a relationship to the wider world that is also embedded in variable relations, rather than simply fixed final ends and judgments. There is never any reason to die in *this* or *that* way, no requirement for total acquiescence to what might be fate, or to contractual and legal relation. And there is no requirement to feel this way or that about how things are or how they went. Judgment is ultimately free. Memories, dreams and silent projections upon other ways of being in relation can hardly be criminalized, and only in the most brutal of regimes are furtive glances punishable

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<sup>319</sup> Here it is useful to concretely acknowledge the nature of both linear and circular time, and the distinct roles that these two conceptions of the passing of materiality over temporality relate to the nature of the conceptualization of human being. See, for example Plessner (1958).

offences. The clinical indistinction between simple exhaustion and clinical depression<sup>320</sup> suggests that there exists temporal recesses for critique and planning between exhaustion and medical diagnosis.<sup>321</sup> Simply put, scenarios driven by climate change that appear end-time-like are not. Mass-extinction in no way suggests the need for the law-likely affects attached to stories in old books, or for that matter in new ones.<sup>322</sup>

With regards the multitudinous response to the law and law-likely forces of natural and human-natural governances, it is useful to remember that a difference between ecosystemic law and the multitude is the multitudinous affordance of social and psychological flexibility outside of apparent nature. Ecosystemic law acts as it does, while the multitude relates in degrees of variation. While governing force may act by its capacities or desires to harm the multitude, the multitude also avoids, observes and is just effected differently by force. In the world's order and disorder, however, the human multitude has been and will be definitionally flexible in relation to itself and in nature.<sup>323</sup> The multitude collaborates to create other cultural ways. If, as

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320 See Surova, Galina & Ulke, Christine & Hegerl, Ulrich (2017) for a discussion of the proximity between exhaustion and depression.

321 See Harney & Moten (2013).

322 This comment refers to the Old and New Testaments of the Bible.

323 Ecological Philosopher Gregory Bateson (1987) argues that any advanced society must have an inbuilt conceptual flexibility so that it does not consume irreplaceable resources that should only be used in order to adapt to unpredictable change (500).

Art Historian T. J. Demos (2009) follows Bateson's point, in favor of artistic responses to climate change. In relation to Bateson's theorization of ecology as the intertwined relations of planetary biology, technology, sociology and politics, Demos argues that Bateson's theorization was "capable of opening up a range of artistic practices dedicated to the complex interlinking of biological, technological, social and political ecologies that construct an 'environment' that can no longer be considered simply as 'natural', and where any 'output', according to the operations of cybernetic feedback, was simultaneously understood to affect the working of the system." (21) In this sense, Historical thought is in itself natural and has ecological impact.

Agamben says, the concept of sovereign order can also be conceptualized as the birth of biopolitics, then biopolitics can be multitudinously re-interpreted (here, foolishly) as the interested management of terrestrial life by and in the interests of the sun that rules in exclusion to all life, as the sun dominates but is disinterested in its earthly relations: A constant fact of behavioral governance is that human life always exists in relation to any variety of powerful “universal” forces: the sun, chemistry, capitalism. The biopolitical relation can be queered to extend life’s meaningful relations in ways that support other ways of judging the human-biological system<sup>324</sup> – life is a regulated activity even within itself.<sup>325</sup> The diversity of theologies over the course of human history immediately demonstrates how the above example is more than just heliocentric play.

Leaving sovereign interests behind – across the multitude’s quotidian lives, affective relations understood by the effects of hunger, or embodied following a nasty encounter with the police, can be described as relating to the regulatory effects of individual and common sense. Though there are justifiable reasons for ignoring common sense, it is variable common sense to avoid both hunger and a police officer’s swinging baton. The ease by which common sense judgments afford human

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324 Concurring with this analysis, Foucauldian scholar Maria Muhle (2014) states: “On the other hand, the specificity of the biopolitical techniques lies in the *positive* and not repressive relation to life and in the fact that such techniques are *intrinsic* and not exterior to its object. Biopolitical techniques increase, protect, and regulate life – in short, they “make live.” And they do so by infiltrating the processes of life (instead of suppressing or submitting them) in order to govern or to rule them from the inside.” (79) Surely the sun has a positive governing effect on life, and is generally unrivalled in terms of its power over the earth.

325 This is in particular a reference to Agamben’s (1999) essay, *Absolute Immanence*, which works through Deleuze’s definition of life which is “desire’s self-constitution as desiringly blessed.” (237) Via Deleuze, Agamben defines life through singularities that push from the beginnings of a Spinozan existence, embracing being’s ability in itself (as a singularity that is aware of itself) to contain the possibilities for life. This study is in agreement with Agamben and Deleuze’s sentiment here only to the extent that life is understood as a relational project, that takes relationality and being with something as a way of defining desire.

avoidance of the most brutal terrestrial violence (thirst, hunger, being run over by moving traffic) sublimates responses to the root causalities of violence over time. For example, if it is common sense to avoid oncoming cars, there may be no sense in banning automobile traffic on the grounds that someone might walk out into traffic and be killed. Humans avoid threats while, variably, keeping them in mind. The same goes for moving towards pleasant, nice and good things.<sup>326</sup> That natural and human-natural governance is made apparent by the nature of their forces and effects, rather than beside the multitude's seemingly vitalistic capacity to survive however, is its judgmental ability to order what and in what modes of governance it can or must accept. In its own time, the individual and collective multitude orders the facts of life and judges what facts and things it privileges as how it would like to be governed. In its own time, in relation to governmental failure, the multitude recognizes that its affection is systemic and that it works socially, in ways exemplified by the PAH, to reorder facts of life and governance – regardless of what the dominant culture and extant formal governance suggests.

Consequential to the facts of organizing life everywhere in the time of climate change, Foucault's essay *Life, Experience and Science* (1998), helps provide a critical frame to these deliberations. The essay is a forward for Foucault's teacher Georges Canguilhem's (1978) *The Normal and the Pathological*. For both thinkers, there are always cultural components attendant to the sciences' judgments. Within *The Normal*, Canguilhem writes, "Normative, in the fullest sense of the word, is that which establishes norms..." (1978 70–71) His work describes how historians of science narrate the varying, multi-directional, and dead-end histories of biological sciences whose approaches nevertheless appeared in their time as normal. Foucault insists that it is not "possible to constitute a science of the living without taking into account, as something essential to its object, the possibility of disease, death,

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326 It is common sense to respond positively to desirous things, though there are also reasons to also not prioritize all good things all the time. The notion of nice things can be understood as relating to the effect of desire as discussed in Spinoza's *Ethics*.

monstrosity, anomaly, and error.” (Foucault 1998 474) All people die; what is important about normativity is its relation to varied rather than fixed concepts. Rather than developing over one fixed line, life invariably relates in changing environments through changing conceptions. This fact relates to the variability of what is internalized or externalized by the katechon or by the niche to manage its relations to gain immunity in time.<sup>327</sup> For Canguilhem and Foucault the practices of living in one era are framed by multitudinous frameworks that in other eras seem monstrous or foolish and in relation to some undesirable manner of death. Relational thought intended to orient positive practice reveals itself as responsive to processes that do come to ends regardless, as life continues anyhow – until it doesn’t. For Foucault, the histories of reparative thoughts must continually define interested being which includes the ends of life. Though this study is disinterested in succinct end-time considerations, Foucault’s thoughts demonstrate how end-time considerations are both particular and multitudinous as a constant and moving target across time.

Climate change appears within the context for the consideration of operative margins for both common and multitudinous practice and being. This consideration asks upon what grounds is multitudinous life desirable and not just possible. The multitude is a given, its presence is never in question; and its marginal relation to natural or more variable human law is what matters here. Common sense has it that forces entangled within capitalist management will provide ground for human being for some time while dealing horror to the planet and the multitude. For Foucault, the evaluations of life share concerns with the ends of the Enlightenment and the questions that attend these ends. The evaluations of life also deal with the power invested in judgment. For this study, talking about life’s means and ends is not a project done on high, but rather a common and multitudinous project proper, as posited by Weheliye.<sup>328</sup> Foucault follows Canguilhem’s process of evaluating the

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<sup>327</sup> This also relates to the nature/culture divide.

<sup>328</sup> In language similar to Wynter’s (Wynter & McKittrick 2015) where “Man2” represents



success of science's rational employment of thought to forward humanity's objective position in the world. Foucault recognizes that his teacher is tasked to judge humanity's many practices of living with its capacities to technically govern and improve these processes. And yet, rather than laying some definition of ideal life against some definition of normal life to see how rational thought has fared over time, Foucault describes an epistemology upon which to totally judge the effects of human governmentality's leadership can be totally judged: "life – and this is its radical feature – is that which is capable of error." (Foucault 1998 476)

As it moves towards its conclusions, this study arrives at a term of judgment for a cultural policy of the multitude. A capacity for error is a qualitative analytic through which cultural work attendant to the margins of the multitude in the time of climate change should be judged. It is qualitative because the terms of what multitudinous errors can be allowed are up for multitudinous debate. The PAH demonstrates how the marginally social can find systemic forgiveness where other governing forces cannot. Having forgiveness (for debt, etc.) is one way that society permits capacity for error. Human capacities for error and forgiveness are understood as having ethical and economic implications for sociality within the multitudes into the variable structures of cultural and law-like life. It is also a useful frame for evaluating human governmental force in relation to climate change.

By following the PAH, this study's synthetic privileging of social movements already posits a judgment. On a political level, this study supports a sociality that works through common notions to effect law-likely effects of the cultural – in relationship to governance in common rather than isolated as the governing force. Common notions, proper to the multitude can socially define needs in relation to what is

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the Western ideal of personhood, Weheliye (2014 82) asks, "What does hunger outside the world of Man feel like? Is it a different hunger, or just the same as the famines created by racializing assemblages that render the human isomorphic with Man? How do we describe the sweetness that reclines in the hunger for survival?"

actually governable. Rather than seeing life as immanent to itself, following Agamben (1999), this study understands that by the nature of our world, life is in no way bound in a needy relation to any singular thing, isolated besides that to which it must variably relate ecologically, biologically and sociologically. Relations are not only written in contract between being and its own possibility, or between citizen and president, king or slave. Relational needs are bound in habits and exchanges between neighbors, friends and partisans, between the humans and their food and the rivers that flush out to the sea. Relations exist as contracts for futures, as secrets told to comrades, in visions of ancestors or of children seven generations to come. Capacitating relational systems with psychological and actual space of possibility and forgiveness for error forwards life in meaningful ways, even through death.

This second section has established the distinctions between law, government, and judgment. In so doing it has also begun to flesh out key elements of the cultural policy it will clarify in the next chapter. What is left to establish in this chapter is a basic sketch explaining how cultural objects work within laws, judgment and governance to make life biopolitical. It will be a basic sketch, because its concerns' demand more complex treatment than is possible within a subchapter of a chapter. The organization of this final section is ultimately defined by the logic of biopolitics attendant ultimately to capitalism. This is because the concept of biopolitics elegantly, basically, folds into itself the concept of the collective organization of life (which can be imagined as the multitude) through its understanding that the variable necessities of life stand in relation to *whatever* the sovereign nominates as necessary.

### **3 Cultural work**

#### **3a Externalizing nature**

Over and beyond the multitudinously particular politics this study supports is a broader law-likely ontology ascribed cross-culturally to cultures-in-general. Definitionally, here and throughout this study, cultural thought can be applied to

anything that humans share; that is, all things that stand between people can be said to have a cultural face – it is their cultural face that makes them conceivable. The goal of this final section is to come to grasp how “standing between” functions in relation to the biopolitics of capital and the possibility of other ways of multitudinous being in relation to self-governance. It has been established that culture is, or embodies, law or law-likely behavioral functions of human relationality. This section seeks therefore to investigate a more specific question further: Drawing from the presumption that the world is already shared, how can radically different outcomes be culturally determined through the materials of the world that always already exist somewhere within the worldly ecology? This question is motivated by the need in this time of climate change for clear differences to be pulled from the same worldly things that are already bound by and within that which Chthulucenic earthly history has already provided. What is of interest here is a general ontology of cultural things that is broader than, though explanatory of, Western ontologies that, as explained below, are grounded upon a particular organization of the nature/culture division.

In spite of their emergence from particular locations – because of capitalism’s world-historical nature,<sup>329</sup> demonstrated by the violent impact of its particular systematization of nature’s abstractions – capitalism’s relations to nature demand special focus. Excluded from the knot of this specific philosophical inquiry, but not ignored by it, are the non-abstract violences that diverse forms of capitalism organize against those who otherwise organize.<sup>330</sup> There is a proximity between capitalism’s systematicity and Hegelian dialectical developments, whose

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329 The term “world historical” refers here to the World-Systems school of history founded by Ferdinand Braudel with which Giavonni Arrighi, Jason W. Moore and others are affiliated. For more on the periodization of capitalism’s world historicity as an emergent and systemic fact of nature, see Moore (2017).

330 This study thinks here, for example, about murderous extra-legal land seizures that operate adjacent to and are ultimately informative for and beneficiaries of Capitalist practice.

universalizing teleologies of culture and politics seem to obscure capacities of immediately meaningful work – behind abstract images of something different (either profit or loss within capitalism, or a higher order with Hegel). Capitalism and its cultural forms produce a difference where things may particularly exist in the world and also within its logic of financialized abstraction. Simply put, an abandoned building may be legally unusable because of abstract financial relations though the building itself is perfectly fit for use. The ways in which things actually operate relates to what they do and how they are caught up in systemicity. How this difference plays out can be witnessed, for example, in the PAH's utilization of the *escrache*. While *escraches* arrived in Spain through a variety of ways, one way is through the international circuit of fine art, which can be seen as a fruit of Hegelian thought and bourgeois culture. Nevertheless, in the hands of the PAH, the *escrache's* practice of identifying political actors to shame them for common ends remains intact. This fact is contingent not only to the *escrache* itself but also to the whole of the PAH's relational framework, which has remained grounded in localized and counter-capitalist politics.

A similar thing can be said for that soda bottle that stood in as a microphone during a PAH direct action training as discussed in the previous chapter. The soda bottle arrives in the PAH office as a product of capitalist exchange. Yet in the PAH member's performing hands, only the most cynical would read the bottle's capitalist inception as determinative of its role. One could cynically see it as a brilliant instance of product placement – multitudinously, this interpretation should not be dismissed, because the multitude will think as it does whether or not the interpretation is actually meaningful. Or, as this study does, one could appreciate the soda bottle's transition into *whatever* material, whose forms shared the quality of microphone-ness that momentarily mattered. Like a microphone, it fit in hand, and that was enough. The *whatever* nature of objects described by Agamben seems to express itself here.

Conceptualizing the nature of cultural things must exceed definitions of culture's

variable law-likely natures. That objects might most directly express meanings attendant to capitalism has been discussed in relation to Agamben and the spectacle, where the spectacle colors the nature of the universal that appears through it. The PAH demonstrates that particular objects can be read in systemically different ways, that objects can produce different outcomes than just being for speculative profit. People universally relate in complex ways.<sup>331</sup> Throughout anthropological thought, descriptive ontologies are written and enacted over fault lines between active agents who hope to determine outcomes through the rest of the world. The active agents have particular affinities in the cultural; to them the rest of the world is often identified as the natural. Philosopher Olivier Surel (2014) points to a task anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro sets for himself of “comparative ontographies” (18) when thinking about the universal as a relational path between the cultural and the natural that organizes how people see the world, and how they see it moving through things. Surel suggests that there are at least two overarching ways to think through how culture universally relates through nature.<sup>332</sup> One way suggests that different cultures access a singular nature differently, and that by compositing all these perspectives together, humans can have a more total sense of nature and the world. Viveiros de Castro identifies this as multiculturalism, which brings different frames to a singular but common nature. Another total way of

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331 Wynter (2014 66) describes a 77,000-year-old piece of artwork found in an archeological cave excavation in what is now South Africa. She highlights through the words of the archeologists that by its abstract nature it demonstrates “the [very] ability *to create and communicate using such symbols*” that demonstrates it as “ ‘an unambiguous marker’ of ‘modern humans’”.

332 Referencing Viveiros de Castro, Surel (2014) remarks that this first model can be understood through the Spinozist conception of nature: “It is to be noted that Viveiros associates naturalism with the posit of an ‘objective universality of bodies and substance’. But what ‘substance’ stands for is not entirely clear. Viveiros’ naturalist, if not a straw man, is a rather curious beast, who defends a naïve version of Spinoza’s rational-ism (a version where the concept of Nature is bluntly equated with that of Substance, stripped bare of the fine-grained distinctions of the Ethics), along with a foggy synthesis of the different programs found under the heading of ‘physicalism’, or the general theory for which everything supervenes on a more fundamental physical level.” (18)

describing the universe that culture reveals is that the universe is different depending on what particular cultures and special beings access it –in Viveiros de Castro’s<sup>333</sup> concept of multi-naturalism a singular category of nature is inconceivable.<sup>334</sup>

There is no reason to resolve this definitional argument for the sake of the multitudes. Rather, this study is satisfied to say that people have multitudinous opinions about the nature of culture’s construction of and approach towards universality. What seems clear is that culture organizes ways of being in the world. Here, this study turns to anthropologist Pierre Clastres and his work among the Amazonian Guarani to expand upon the meaning of this claim. Clastres articulates Guarani’s understanding of culture thusly:

Culture apprehends power as the very resurgence of nature. In fact, it is as though these societies formed their political spheres in terms of an intuition which for them would take the place of a rule: namely, that power is essentially coercion; that the unifying activity of the political function would be performed not on the basis of the structure of society and in conformity with it, but on the basis of an incontrollable and antagonistic beyond, that in essence power is no more than the furtive manifestation of nature in its power. (Clastres 1977 34–35)

It is useful to look at Clastres’ language here. “Culture apprehends power as the very resurgence of nature.” To *apprehend* is to know and to hold. Culture does not dismiss power and pass it by; rather, culture uses power’s affordances. Culture utilizes

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333 Viveiros De Castro (1992, 2012, 2014)

334 Surprisingly, Surel (2014 12) finds an affinity (though not an equivalence) between Multinaturalism and the Hegelian worldview. This is based on the Hegelian distinction between body and spirit, in how within both the Multinatural Amerindian perspective and Hegelian dialectics, an object can actually represent or be something other than as it appears. He also identifies within Viveiros de Castro’s work where the anthropologist found a similar connection between Hegelian thought and Multinaturalism.

nature (the biological, geological, physical and chemical and social processes of worldly systems) to invert nature and utilize it within the actively human sphere. Clastres' Guarani have an ambivalence towards power that reflects their awareness of nature's dual nature – in its wild and original form beyond the human and as knowledge/power in the hands of people. Nature is a wildly powerful force that culture can utilize through particular ethics and techniques and objects. To approach the universal is to use culture to apprehend power through ways that enculturate it, make it amenable to particular human works, particularly and towards general directions.

### **3b Power and the arrangement of life over history**

This study is under no illusion that it is possible to write a universal description for how culture can at all times interact in order to universally produce singular outcomes. What Clastres' description offers is a meaningful way to return to the nature/culture divide that identifies the impact of that line as a cultural object in itself. The work of historian and eco-philosopher Jason W. Moore (2015) is instructive, when it comes to considering the how power is organized in capitalism as objects. In *Capitalism in the Web of Life*, Moore presents the eco-historical way in which particular arrangements were made to organize capitalism towards a general scale as it gradually emerged as a governing concept out of the Late Middle Ages of Europe.

Briefly, other theorists focus on different compositions of the transition; Wynter (2015, 2003) highlights this transition in European governmental logics by following power's through-line as it drives across theological and then secular logics; where capitalism collaborates first with rationalism before emerging as the dominant mode of thought. One thing Agamben (2011) traces is how different understandings of the angelic, as stand-ins for good news about different ways to consider situations, differs across the Abrahamic religions, and how the Christian angelic singularly allows for conceptualizations of governance to transition towards one that provides secular capitalism with the answers. Foucault (2007 365–366)

summarizes the slow but inexorable introduction of profit, rather than ecclesiastic and eschatological concern, as the most reliable method for state management of power and governing capacities – finding general stability, value and profit in managing increasing populations. Moore demonstrates the particular ways that those who would become capitalism’s agents organized its systematicity in relation to collapsing medieval order.<sup>351</sup> It is useful to trace his history in some detail in advance of an explanation, so to demonstrate what, in cultural terms, is understood by what is explained.

Life in Medieval Europe was generally set between peasant and lordly relations under a weak regent and distant though present Pope. Moore (2003) describes the formational grounds of modern Europe as resulting from its resolution of the Feudal Crisis of Medieval Europe. The Feudal Crisis is the name given to the political crisis of the ruling class in relation to the experience of a European population as a whole. It generalizes the lived experience of people in time (from approximately 1100 to 1300) organizing their individual and collective lives within the feudal system– and in relation to climactic, geographical, sociological, political, and cultural ecologies (etc.). The crisis is historically characterized by decreasing land productivity, increasing populations, famine and disease. For the ruling classes of local landlords and weak national regents, this meant steadily declining taxes and less profits from sales.

Environmentally, by 1300, trade had increased bacterial and viral transmission through previously isolated regions – a cooling climate seemed to compound these trends, resulting in famines of historic proportions in 1315–1317 and, in 1348, through an outbreak of the Black Death. “Feudalism’s fate may already have been

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351 Describing the cyclical nature of capitalism with its system-imminent crisis, Moore (2015 10) writes in his introduction, “That pattern is one in which new technologies and new organizations of power and production emerged after great systemic crises, and resolved the older crises by putting nature to work in powerful new ways.”



sealed prior to 1348. Less certain, however, was the nature of the social system that would succeed it.” (112) In the flux of history, between plans and what cannot be planned or planned for, Moore narrativizes the growing dominance of capitalism in specific accounts of transformation in land and labor patterns. At the beginning of Moore’s list:

- 1) The agricultural revolution of the Low Countries (c. 1400–1600) – motivated by the crisis of sinking peat bogs resulting from medieval reclamation – which allowed three-quarters of Holland’s labor force to work outside of agriculture.
- 2) The mining and metallurgical revolution of Central Europe, thoroughly transforming the political ecology of forests across the region. (2014 134)

While this transition would eventually emerge as beneficial to capitalist interests, the immediate causal effects attendant to questions of labor seemed relatively independent from the interests of a governing merchant class’ that would emerge more strongly at the resolution of the crisis.<sup>352</sup> Peasant revolts spread after the Black Death, and as Moore summarizes, “The class power of Western European peasantry had developed to such an extent that the reestablishment of serfdom became exceedingly unlikely” (ibid.).<sup>353</sup> Feudal order was such that landlords found themselves unable to compel peasants to produce beyond their own sustenance

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352 As Brenner (2001) points out, medieval land reclamation in Holland was carried out by the relatively autonomous Dutch peasantry over the course of several hundred years. And as Holmes and Quataert (1986) note, mining in Central Europe’s early modern history was primarily a labor carried out to supplement household income rather than as employment directly resulting from dispossession.

353 On first blush, one thing of interest in this historical narrative is how large-scale resistance movements historically organized in relation to and beyond local conditions around universal figures such as a king, carried on the backs of multitudes carried upon against local seigneurial powers. It also interesting how this account falls in line with orthodox Marxist narratives regarding the European development from serfdom to proletarianization and, for Moore’s interest, towards communism.

needs as the peasantry. In this power gap, monarchical authority, then a historically weak force, began to dominate over local seigneurial power as the monarch “tended to centralize popular reactions to seigneurial extortion or repression.” This massification of peasant power for itself and in revolt against local leadership favored an abstract orientation to distant monarchy that helped sparked “major collective movements.” (Moore 2003 113)

Subsequent proletarianization was orchestrated as a response from regulatory power to peasant revolt. (Moore 2016 3) With their newfound authority, monarchies found themselves able to reorganize restive populations in a way their lordly relations could not. The goal of proletarianization from above, according to Moore, was to limit the peasant autonomy that bothered the ruling classes. Peasants were successively kicked off their land and made aimless and vagabond.<sup>354</sup>

Proletariatization’s “‘central function’ was ‘the internal maintenance and external defense of private property regime’ – and may we add the *expanded, globalizing, reproduction* of that regime?” (ibid.) Factory work would become a way to profitably occupy this freed labor.

In other words, in its initiation, concepts central to capitalism and colonialism were system-immanent, and inoculative to the ongoing problems faced by propertied interests. Moore reveals the contradictory developments within European working-class consciousness in relation to the global subjugation of the non-European multitude.<sup>355</sup> Accounting for Europe’s expanding ecological footprint, he details how relatively early in its history of colonizing, it began to severely impact lands distant from its shores. His account resumes as follows:

3) The first signs of the modern sugar-slave nexus in Madeira, whose rapid

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354 See Federici (2004) on this period of great vagabondage.

355 Here this study looks specifically towards Arrighi & Silver (2001), Chakrabarty (2007).

rise and decline (1452–1520s) was necessitated by rapid deforestation.

4) Madeira's crisis was followed quickly by the sugar frontier's movement to São Tomé (1540s–1590s) and the first modern, large-scale plantation system, which allowed one-third of the island to be deforested.

5) Northeastern Brazil displaced São Tomé at the commanding heights of the world sugar economy after 1570, from which issued the first great wave of clearing Brazil's Atlantic rainforest. (Moore 2014 17)

Capitalist organizationality began expanding beyond its borders partially in an effort to manage problems within Europe. For Moore (2003), the relative strength and autonomy of the emerging Western European proletariat, due at least partially to what can be recognized as self-determined actions, is one reason that governing structures desired external colonization. Moore's central claim regarding the nature/culture division is that while the division of culture in nature precedes capitalism, capitalism's ethic is to imagine that it exists wholly outside and independently of nature. In this way, it creates a spatial imagination that internalizes the world as the seamlessly unified "us" or "we the people" and externalizes everyone and everything else as other problems – contentious internal class conflicts can appear resolved when externalized as collaborative violence beyond Europe as a European project.<sup>356</sup> Through general consumptive habits, even the most dispossessed of Europe and North America can materially relate to the others of the world as raw material and sources of cheap goods.

With Catherine Malabou's forwarding of the socio-political nature of addiction and its worldly impact, this chapter circles back to its introduction. Social order and environmental conditions facilitate the organization of life in its place to run cheap capitalist production up and down life's niches. This abbreviated eco-history of capitalist development demonstrates how organizational efforts sit biopolitically

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<sup>356</sup> See, for example Césaire (1950/2001), Fanon (1963/2004).

upon existing cultural relations and tendencies to determine margins of general behavior despite anyone's conceptual capacity to act beyond those margins. Moore ultimately describes the set of regulatory concepts that capitalism develops for itself to augur profit and maintain power over relations, through its development of the "four cheaps" of labor power, food, energy, and raw materials." (20) The "four cheaps" are the natural resources that capitalism suggests it can freely rely upon for profit, in varying degrees, as coming from external and bountiful nature. Out of what culture can determine as bountiful or worthless or essentially present – slavery, women's work, wild land, coal, the property of others – law develops paths for capitalism's profit by some sort of conceptual expropriation. Moore identifies how capitalist abstraction over time consistently enforces its particular divisional nature based on what it insists be valued as human, and what is to be naturalized as "natural" within its general construction of reality. Moore describes how capitalist processes work to culturally erase (environmental, social) costs and overstate other (often European, often male) natural costs in order to direct surplus energy, profit and libidinal flow for its interest holders.

### **3c Policymaking objects as systemic nature**

With the concept of Multinaturalism, one can imagine the powerful logic of profit surging through capital's subjects and objects, determining over-arching intentional outcomes through its powerful nature. Moore's description of how capitalism functions not as a dividing line between nature and culture but as an abstracting force from nature is such that this logic seems to draw itself. Stakemeier and Vishmidt (2016) further clarify how through capitalism, the relations between the multitude and objects of the world are externally governed by this for profit logic. Profit can be both central and yet sometimes peripheral to contemporary life's continued development. Capitalism enforces its own abstractions by organizing within the already existing field of social relations the need for its own reproduction.<sup>363</sup> As an objective effect of abstraction, capitalism makes presents a

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363 Stakemeier and Vishmidt describe capitalism as " 'automatic,' because it increases itself,

variety of possibilities, and makes itself available as a means of fulfilling these possibilities, all the while obscuring the social and environmental grounds that determine needs, ideations and capacities. The engines of autonomous capital are poised to produce capitalist effects within the social body. “Marx calls capital a ‘subject’ because it is self-position, and also because it produces the (social, material) conditions which are at the same time its presuppositions.” (41)

Stakemeier writes a pre-history of the cultural concept of autonomy (13–17) that defines it in two ways: one that rests autonomy in the distinctions between manual and intellectual labor,<sup>364</sup> and one that rests autonomy as independence from particular force. On independence from force, she references the characterization of “courtly art” in the late Middle Ages as secular<sup>365</sup>; secularity based on painterly and topical interests – separation from location, history and the symbolic in order to pursue artistic principles related to visibility. Stakemeier then notes the socio-political entrance of the concept of autonomy within philosophy through Kant’s recognition of the governing utility of reason and individual aesthetic judgment. Hegel in his treatise on law says that autonomy “is nothing other than [self] interest, activity of the subjectivity in general. Autonomy is this (formal) self-determining,” (16) and is the manner through which the “absolute spirit” of the world is made real

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realizes itself as a condition of its continued existence, without the intervention of any other agency extraneous to it: once a capitalist mode of production is established, capital survives by constantly positing the conditions it needs to reproduce and survive as the conditions for that society to reproduce survive (wage-labour, property, and the commodity).” (41)

364 This distinction can find historic legitimization in Aristotle’s distinction between work and labor, and it is also famously employed by Arendt (1998). Stakemeier references Marx & Engel’s *German Ideology* to set up the logic of such categorization and the impact of such distinction: “The exclusive concentration of artistic talent in individuals and the suppression of it in the greater masses is the result of the division of labor.” (8)

365 This obviously overlaps with developments described above and in relation to the developments of capitalism. It also mirrors the Peter Bürger’s conceptualization of artistic of autonomy as discussed in Chapter 2.

via individual enlightenment as a general social process.

On the social level, cultural logics (as policed culture) become capitalist instruments when the seemingly independent “autonomous” capacities of individual social determinations, regarding what is interesting in work, move through capitalized imaginaries. Capital imaginaries suggest that meaningful social work and independent determinations can be meaningfully determined within capitalist order. Capitalism’s Leviathan head is nothing other than the sovereign determination that moneyed self-interest will persevere regardless of its body’s composition. This head drives policy through its influence on any cultural appearance that may attend to it. The appearance of the so-called autonomous sphere of social and cultural life within society is affectively made exclusive from nature through logistics, marketing, entertainment industries, labor relations etc. From the outside, this autonomous sphere of the social and cultural life of capitalism is made apparent by border walls, guns, regulations, impassable deserts and oceans, entry fees, debt, the police, etc.

Nevertheless, what can be called judgement or lack thereof is a capacity proper to the human multitude rather than the sovereign or citizen blessed with the capacity to autonomously have their self-interests commonly expressed for them through governance and law. This is because in time, people think, feel and act how they can in relation to *whatever*. Ecological conditions, human experience and innovation suggest particular modes for human sociality whether or not capitalism tries to squeeze profit from them.

Humans, unqualified, are those simple and bare humans who have always and will have always existed beside or outside law and persist to the extent that they do without the mathematical relations of capital. They see what its logistics bring them and what they do not bring, or they don’t see this at all. The unqualified person has the capacity to take pause, and find some space between themselves and the situation. This is a different sort of autonomy, qualified by intellectual awareness

rather than institutional capacity. “Autonomy is the point at which the subject thinks herself ‘complete’ before she encounters objectivity and realizes that she is not, and that she has to universalize the reflection of the objective in the subjective in order to surpass autonomy and thus sublimate individuality in the universal.” (44). Vishmidt understands this as a general formula of the subject eventually thinking through and making something (abstracting) of their situation in an effort to affirmatively remake themselves, by some alternative relation to *whatever* system. (44)

The understanding here is that art is a speculative project in the full sense of the word. It is financially but also philosophically and strategically speculative. Vishmidt says, “Ideologically speaking... art is both a protest against the brutality of the world and a confirmation that this brutality has limits, preserving hope, akin to the role of relation: redemptive in its negation.”(36) Alienation produces the object of inalienation; crisis generates responses that may or may not be incorporated into a system as its immunative inverse so that the system holds. This is the distinction between the being of the PAH that is created in the context of crisis and the idea of the PAH employed here. The descriptive terrain of biopolitics tries to conceptually capture manners that capitalism generally organizes to draw profit from beyond its own limits. Cultural forms can be successively organized in relation to capitalism and its regulatory modes, promoting the ultimate autonomy of profit over time – that is, while different cultural projects occur, those that last over time are often those that become profitable. But art and critical thinking in the most general sense are the fruits and bitter fruits of such ecologies. As real and virtual objects in the world they help materially bear out effects of the projects that caused their expression, and they socially persist beside capital to its critical deficit. Incorporated into the system, as happens, they provide more terrain for the spectacle. As bitter fruits of ongoing relations, such as living and thinking through the tumult of the Chthulucene, they can overflow and run against normative systematicity. Their excess stands as such.

Classical communist political theory saw the role of the working class, of

autonomous labor, as the inheritors of history. The steady increase of collaboration between worker movements within “First World” governance East and West was a hallmark of the normalization of antagonistic politics well into the 1970s.

Contemporary Communization theory can be seen as hanging onto the theoretical perspective that the biopolitics of capitalist social order have effectively managed the bitter fruits of class relations by either internalizing or externalizing dissent, to the extent that systems of both order and dissent must be overcome.<sup>366</sup> Historicizing this process of capitalism overcoming its own shadows, communization theorist Jasper Bernes (2011) identifies the fragmentation of working class identity, achieved by its affective modulation and dispersion in the fragmenting labor pools differentiated as productive and reproductive work. In the quest for more profit and self-consistency, Bernes also sees a future composed of capital’s increase and greater dispossession. In Bernes’s account, capitalism has expanded its biopolitical presence upon the terrain of social reproduction to the extent that “it renders incoherent all attempts to imagine, as past revolutions did, an egalitarian set of social relations laid atop the existing means of production. It is the end of a communist politics that is merely redistributive. If we want communism, then we will have no choice but to take our radicalism to the root, to uproot capital not merely as social form but as material sediment, not merely as relations of production but as productive forces.” (163)

As this study claims that all people, however qualified, have the capacity from any position to gain a reflective foothold against something that is holding them down, it also claims that anything – not just “art”, has the capacity to inspire “protest against the brutality of the world.” That is, if art can be *whatever* object that relationally helps develop critical relations and maintain other ways of being in the world, any

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366 Writing in *Communization and its Discontents*, Jasper Bernes (2011) describes contemporary class composition in its self-abolition (its own deconstruction), where the most meaningful forms of protest are actually against “the institutions charged with reproducing the class relation (labor unions, social welfare offices)” (160). This study hopes that it has demonstrated both here and in the previous chapter that contemporary art is one formal institution of social reproduction of class in addition to those listed by Bernes.



object can result in *whatever*. Any object, not just art, can help confirm that brutality has limits, and might preserve hope in some manner. Hope is not a concern of Communization Theory, and this study's claim for "hope" via any object is not intended to be understood as optimistic – it is intended to reflect the sensible shattering of contemporary institutions' capacity to deal with things in the light of a changing climate where people without qualifications (the individuals of the multitude) desire something else. Capitalism cannot account for the stability of the earthly systems to the extent that it really regulates it (the earth).<sup>367</sup> The fact that capitalism can't stabilize the climate demonstrates how economic theories and affirmative biopolitics face incredibly steep challenges in actually accounting for all of life and all of the planets' relations.<sup>368</sup>

Between this study's claim that "all people and all objects" can find some ground to stand on, and Bernes' recognition of the total capture of being in Western politics, the multitude is in varying relation to affective and material relation of the contingency named crisis. It is for a cultural policy of the multitude to attend to positions articulated at the center of capitalism's reproductive crisis (as Bernes and others Communization theorists would have it, among the "growing pool of proletarianized technical and clerical workers" (162) that include precaritized, de-classed labor) and those who have always been structurally at its margins where Western cultural forms hardly function. To understand "art" stripped of its contemporary, contingent institutions (its formal representational structures, its

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367 See for example Leonardi's (2017) analysis of the inability of Carbon Markets to address the issue of climate change while generating profits for the biggest carbon polluters. Conversely, he suggests that capitalism under other forms of governance beyond profit can serve as a useful regulatory form.

368 Leonardi (2012) argues that an eventual management of climate can only be achieved through regulations that reconstruct the ontology of "goods" beyond profit. "Rather, it is the fact that those rules cannot be exclusively – or even primarily – ascribed to state authority or market invisible hand. Commons are 'goods; which cannot be categorized as either 'public' or 'private.'" (345)

theoretical, structural and its formal reproductive structures) is to understand the potential held within any object to universally relate in a singular or multitudinous manner and to have no real, particular meaning at all. To this end, the study's conclusions try not to objectify the organizational structure of the PAH as *the answer* to the Chthulucenic crisis – forms and organizational structures find their way into the normalization of capitalist biopolitics. Rather, the PAH's multitudinous and embodied social manners are objectified as general orientational perspectives demonstrating the fluidity of relations. Culture extends particular social ways over time while the social adjusts cultural forms to the extent it is capable. These variable perspectives are what can be multitudinously conceptualized in relation to cultural form. The final line of inquiry in this chapter assesses how cultural thought might politically approach the liminal space between a culture policed by capitalism and one that finds itself attendant to another order by cultural perspectives on power. This assessment can only just begin to grasp what will remain sensible in the mix through the collapse of structured meaning with the tumultuous transformation of ecological and political relations.

### **3d Policy in the liminal space of critique and collapse**

Communization theorists like Bernes and Endnotes (2011) look towards radical activity to tear down institutions of social reproduction<sup>375</sup> within capitalist societies, so as to disallow the composition of new relations from which to extract profit. This is a cultural proposal for individual meaning-production, one that Communization theorists term self-abolition.<sup>376</sup> This study understands self-abolition as the construction of a social relation in freefall, with any process of social reformulation

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375 Endnotes (2011 26) writes that they are interested in the destruction “of the capitalist class relation, and the complex of social forms which are implicated in this reproduction – value-form, capital, gender distinction, state form, legal form, etc. In particular, such an overcoming must necessarily be the direct self-abolition of the working class, since anything short of this leaves capital with its obliging partner, ready to continue the dance of accumulation.”

376 “Yet it is still the working class which must abolish itself.” (Endnotes 2011 27)

occurring afterwards, when capitalism's capacity to determine relations has been destroyed.<sup>377</sup> Self-abolition abandons affirmative political projects at the level of cultural organization. Self-abolition leaves capitalism without an "obliging partner," without a cultural composition that capitalism can organize for the partner's eventual exploitation.

In his essay "No Selves to Abolish", Aarons (2016) comments on the concept of self-abolition in relation to Frank B. Wilderson III and Mbembe's Afropessimism. Aarons understands self-abolition as a concept aimed at exceeding the confines of identity, which he understands as racialized subjectification imposed upon people by the state. Downsides to identity-based discourses around blackness exist even in relation to progressive state-based diversity-interested governance. He surveys the theory of identity within Afropessimism, which critiques identity politics for forcing black people to prove themselves deserving by analogizing "itself with White civil society."<sup>(4)</sup> In militant protests against the policing of bare life, Aarons finds an inchoate tension on the street between the insurrection and the need for ongoing communal management, expressing it as a conflict between autonomy and self-abolition.<sup>378</sup> Aarons recognizes self-abolition as a process of performance; self-abolition played out upon the actually existing social terrain would be an "unthinkable vanishing point in socio-historical conjuncture." (6)

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377 "In particular, such an overcoming must necessarily be the direct self-abolition of the working class, since anything short of this leaves capital with its obliging partner, ready to continue the dance of accumulation. Communization signifies the process of this direct self-abolition, and it is in the *directness* of this self-abolition that communization can be said to signify a certain 'immediacy.'" (Endnotes, 2011 26)

378 Aarons (2016 7) frames the ongoing resolution of the tension between Self-Abolition and a quest in some form for autonomy of black bodies in this way: "the meeting point between Blackness's war on enslavedness and those who might envision themselves as its 'allies' is not in a paradigmatic commonality to affirm between us; it lies, rather, in what we wish to negate in ourselves that might free the way for us all to find something more powerful than the selves presently available to us and denied to them."

From the position of the unqualified black rather than from the declassified person about whom Bernes writes, this tension is grounded upon an ontological and skin-based ability to lawfully count under the terms of the current order. Aarons summarising Wilderson (2014) on the non-position of Black people states that “social death is a condition, void, not of land, but of a capacity to secure relational status through transindividual objects – be those objects elaborated by land, labour, or love.” (9) When acting outside of but in dialogue with law, blackness can only mediate its pain through pleas to be understood as human

Wilderson’s 2014 essay *The Black Liberation Army and the Paradox of Political Engagement* qualifies the political engagement of Black Liberation Army member Assata Shakur’s 1973 “To My People” communiqué while in prison. The “paradox of political engagement” alluded to in title of the essay is based on the fact that as black subjects, Shakur and Wilderson find no leverage in the political discourse of the European settler societies where they live.<sup>379</sup> Here, they are bare and animal and provided no way to mediate their suffering without elevating the society that subjects them to such violence through diversity-interested governance. The paradox in political engagement is their sense that regardless of how they are subjectified, they know they should not have to suffer in the ways they do. Wilderson claims, in manners akin to Agamben’s description of those bare lives beside law, that black people can be subject to an unfathomable and unrecognized social violence even though they are foundational to such societies. When the underclass revolts, civil society and the state affectively express their “fear of a black planet”. (25) This fear is of a scenario where society’s norms are overturned in some apocalyptic nonsense, and where lawful citizenry is subjected to the same conditions that it has afforded the underclass; under conditions of life where death is the only sanctuary. Alone besides the state, black suffering lacks ontological meaning under the state’s

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379 This same inability to matter which occurs, even under Socialist and Marxist relations following Communization Theorists but also Arrighi & Silver (2001), Chakrabarty (2009), Moore (2015).

terms. Theoretically, as humans unqualified to appear, they have no leverage to be counted, lack “the capacity to transpose time into event, and the capacity to transpose space into place.” (11)

Between this study’s claim that “all people and all objects” can find some ground to stand on, and Wilderson’s claim that Black suffering is unmediatable by a disinterested Human culture<sup>380</sup> is his caveat that “I should make it clear that this does not mean that the Black has no inner life and that psychoanalysis is of no use to us in thinking about that inner life. It just means that such a journey involves... a symptomatic analysis of the text” (33). With a quote from Shakur’s communiqué, Wilderson explains that despite lacking the grounds for any meaningful political project, politics stand as a request for a common sanctuary made through hardly unmediated human connectivity. “Black brothers, Black sisters, i want you to know that i love you and i hope that somewhere in your hearts you have love for me. My name is Assata Shakur...” (5) Without an ability to articulate actionable political projects but nevertheless driven by a need to act, Wilderson makes central a politics of uncertainty. As political uncertainty, it is a cultural and determined willingness to give in time and space and in struggle and regardless of outcome, to possibility for sustained political comfort – whether or not there is a conceivable resolution of the situation. This form of love is a request to hang on to *whatever* as the place that might be filled, generally, with love. Rather than *whatever* culture policed by capitalism, Wilderson seems to propose a culture policed by an uncertain determination to build conditionally meaningful alliances in and against time.

Between this study’s claim that “all people and all objects” can find some ground to stand on, and Bernes and Wilderson’s doubts, stands Stakemeier and Vishmidt (2016) who might agree with the general nature of the “all people” claim. For them,

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380 “The Slave’s relationship to violence is not contingent, it is gratuitous – it bleeds out beyond the grasp of narration, from the Symbolic to the Real, where therapy and politics have no purchase.” (7)

the liminal space that this final section has been following can sit within the autonomy they prescribe to art – which they bracket as intellectual work. (80) They conceptualize autonomy as either following the distinctions between manual and intellectual labor (political autonomy), or resting on notional independence from any particular force (juridical autonomy) externalized as other. Towards their conclusion, investigation settles on a definition of autonomy that centers around a weak political autonomy based on an artwork that “presents an understating of work as an activity which is measureless, or which can be measured only in terms of its merging of production and reproduction, of maintenance and creation, and which produces an over-arching subject.” (78) This very measurelessness is the reason why this study attends to sociality.

The overarching sociality that production and reproduction, maintenance and innovation produce is potentially a politically aware “solidarity-collectivist form of human relations” (78). It is aware because it is caught up in the system yet able to determine its own thoughts. As a general subject involved with reproductive labor, sociality’s relative autonomy is constructed between the law and law-likely order of things that compose and particularly recompose life. That is, Stakemeier and Vishmidt recognize, by other terms, the space for life that eco-social systematicity provides between nature and culture (the niche), which allows for a margin of space from nature’s wider variation. Within this space they focus on the unrecognized and never-ending reproductive labor that manages to maintain it. Unrecognized despite the centrality of its multiple routines that everywhere stand at the core of holding general sociality together in its particular ways, stands the capacity for the development of a critical perspective on the social labor it does. Stakemeier and Vishmidt posit that critical work here reflects and intervenes into law-likely cultural forms, and has the capacity to modulate the general systematicity with which reproductive labor pairs. The authors refer to this critical production as an “antisocial thesis”. Like art in general, the “antisocial thesis” is speculative; here it speculates on culture’s systematicity, and aims to undermine “the social figure

identified as the natural bearer of the future.” (79)<sup>381</sup>

The autonomy that Stakemeier and Vishmidt give to art is like that which Arendt (1998) ascribes to the category of work. Arendt identifies work’s weightless ability to intervene in methods of labor and social reproduction, as work is tasked with designing machines and ways for living – whether those machines are legal, artistic, architectural, process-based or industrial. In Arendt (1998), the bearer of the future is embodied in the image of the child.<sup>382</sup> But in Stakemeier and Vishmidt’s “antisocial thesis” and the interests of this study, this “understanding of reproduction cannot be one that mirrors the naturalization of human procreation” (Stakemeier & Vishmidt 2016 79). In other words, Stakemeier, Vishmidt and this study recognize no external compulsion to reproduce on a societal level. Rather, in the interest of further cultural work freed from the unconscious compulsion to produce *whatever* capitalist relation, what is of interest here is how their proposal asks *whatever* artwork to be policed by all other natural, social and cultural relations that might run through life’s reproductions and allow for the critical expression of how capitalism (or whatever) makes life unbearable. The artwork they highlight aims to break the cycle of capitalist reproduction by highlighting systemic failures within the cycle of *whatever* system. The explicitness of exchange within systematicity<sup>383</sup> is what distinguishes their proposal from Bernes and Wilderson – though as multitude, all are equal. To produce objects that are critical of the assumed bearers of the future means putting a skeptical halt on assumptions of the future in order to anchor necessary adjustment towards other regulatory horizons;

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381 Mansoor (2013) comes to similar conclusions more concisely.

382 Arendt, to qualify this hope embodied in the child (1998 246) quotes from the New Testament at the birth of the Messiah, Jesus. “It is this faith in and hope for the world that found perhaps its most glorious and most succinct expression in the few words with which the Gospels announced their ‘glad tidings’: ‘A child has been born unto us.’” (247)

383 This explicitness of systemicity demonstrates in other ways what Hansen (2015) claims regarding the ongoing cultural-ness of *whatever* activist project despite *whatever* insurrectionary goals it holds.

other in relation to those demanded by capitalism's regulatory objects.

Stakemeier and Vishmidt's ambivalence towards the reproduction of capitalism, while appreciating the systemicity that art and life is enmeshed within, helps define this study's ambivalence towards most particular teleologies. A basic precept of the cultural policy of the multitude is that cultural forms that stand for capitalist governance needn't be reproduced. This cultural policy is attendant to the global ecology in its particular systemic appearances rather than its universal governance. A capacity for error<sup>384</sup> is the experimentation with and within meaningful margins through systemicity to strengthen what culturally increases those forgivable margins and what in the system is unforgivable.<sup>385</sup> The final chapter of this study will think through these points.

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384 "[A]rt is at the same time itself exposed to its inherent measurelessness" (Stakemeier & Vishmidt 2016 87) and in and beyond the margins it has to work with, errors are made. Critical work at its best is able to identify what is vital within and beyond the margins and make appropriate political judgment. Judgment in itself is free, and political judgment has consequences.

385 In respect to the multitude, besides looking towards Enlightenment judgment and ends such as Hegel's, one might also look at Native American law, which according to Hall (2015) looks towards the universal. "Indigenous aesthetics are rooted in culture and community, with the enmeshed responsibilities of living well in the ecologies of our ancestors." (282) For Hall, this responsibility necessitates a historiography, a critical play with the universals of the past. "(T)he pressures of colonization have demanded that we interrogate false and simplistic interpretations of tradition, while renewing those voices of the most specifically targeted by the colonial system." (284–285)



## Chapter 5

### Conclusions

The multitude appears in variable relation to that which would want to harness life for its own ends by crossing law with life. This chapter aims to do just that; cross life with a proposal for the production of law-likely cultural work. For, as stated in this study's introduction; while in the interests of the multitude, this study is written *for* cultural workers. This cultural work joins other cultural forces of living in relation to the multitude's positioning between the governing forces of climate change and the squeezing of life by capital. Formally qualified, cultural workers temporarily remove themselves from the multitude and become something other than the endless variety of things: they join other actors proposing something other than that things simply are. This chapter ends with a list of policy directives and statements for their consideration. What matters most with the multitude's sociality is how it encounters crisis and makes sense of it for its own terms, rather than for governance; this study looks towards the different orientations to governance that PAH members take in response to dispossession, as described in Chapter 3. Climate change is an issue because of how cultural formations attendant to capitalism's organization of particular human ways of being acts to dispossess general human organizationality from its historic capacities to more easily adjust to the natural world. Culture can further scaffold capacities for the multitude to socially make up that space of adjustment.

The study is framed by the Chthulucenic knot of relationality and the tautology of the multitude governing itself in relation to governance that is constructed from concepts the multitude itself produces. Chapters 1 and 2 demonstrate ways that culture has been conceptualized as forms that generally manage human organizationality. Chapter 1 demonstrates, with examples drawn from art and anthropology, how critical cultural thought directs meaningful activity towards the conceptual development of disciplines—sometimes at the expense of focus on the poesis of social necessity within particular contexts, among other things. Chapter 2 demonstrates what disciplinary thought nevertheless provides to the multitudes while also explaining the actual stakes of climate change. Through a discussion of the *Dark Mountain Project*, the chapter demonstrates

how challenges to human organizationality by anthropocenic climate change can reverberate through ongoing tendencies within politically cultural expressions that only further their law-likely manners rather than forcing them to respond to the general nature of the climactic threat. Theoretically, Chapter 3 introduces the juncture of governmental failure and meaningful leadership as the zone where the multitude can commonly reorient its own social relation to governance. Chapter 3 demonstrates the PAH's embodied approach that thinks, and eventually acts, through the reorganization of social relations attendant to law and its law-likely institutions. The fourth suggests how culture and natural law work through the multitudinous ontologies of life— an ontology here that relates to the body of the multitude that may be definitionally composed of one or many actors. Chapter 4 demonstrates how cultural arrangements extend particular ways of relating over time, and discusses how when these ontologies no longer function, culture and the social have ways to address and recompose the multitude in relation.

This concluding chapter concisely rearticulates a set of definitions, thoughts and formulations derived from these previous chapters to explain the framework this cultural policy ultimately suggests. This chapter first reiterates several concepts often associated with either ecology or governance left at the study's conceptual margins to help focus on the matter at hand. Then, it sketches an anthropology of the multitude's relationship to itself and to the laws of climate change. Following that, is a discussion of the relationship posed between the social and cultural that is attendant to such an anthropology, which is specifically orientated to the nature/culture relation. Through a specific reiteration of how the nature/culture divide is enforced by cultural thought attendant to capitalism, a terrain for the framework for cultural work in the time of climate change is proposed. This terrain is the space of the policy's enactment- the policy here suggests specific ways for cultural production to meaningfully relate to climactic change and the ways of being human that a culture attendant to capitalism is disinterested in.

### **1 What is extraneous to this study**

To clarify the study's margins and interests, it is useful to first reiterate what this study has left to its side. While human activity is multitudinous, a cultural policy enacted in

relation to climate change and the contemporary multitude is not. This study focuses on how the multitude relates to contemporary governmental dispositifs in relation to climate change. Thus, throughout the preceding chapters, concepts have been explicitly marginalized in order to keep the multitude's capacity for self-governance in relation to this dispositif in sight. In favor of the multitude's multitudinous capacity to govern itself socially, this study has sidelined formal solutions that are often highlighted in relation to managing climate change. That is, the first chapter states that while this study is generally interested in the development of alternative technologies and strategies to acquire and manage resources— such as green technology, food sharing, improved soil management, architectural solutions, etc..... they are not the immediate focus of the work. While their utilization might advance the general goals of the project, this study is interested in developing the social grounds where their development and application makes common sense; and where their application is for the benefit of the common rather than for a governmental that is often indiscernible from its own private interest.

Chapter 2 recognizes the disciplinary and management techniques of governing bodies and concepts with global reach— and identifies their anchors in (Euro-American) state and (upper) class-oriented (macro) politics. It discusses structures of global governance such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the international human rights frameworks. In the chapter it is stated that occasionally, governmental bodies make rulings, policy and organize force in ways that is of benefit, or least diminishes the violence, to the multitude. In such cases, this study suggests that despite the manner of their compositional power, the fact that these governances can be of use to multitudinous ends should not be disregarded. Nevertheless, because of their lawly composition such government forms fall out of this study's purview.

Chapter 4 articulates the ways of common cultural praxis, and brings attention to why a focus on the specific violence that governmental forces bring to bear falls out from this study's focus. Looking at the ideological and biopolitical force of Western-style governance over the multitude, the chapter consciously chooses not to focus on what military, police and economic dispossession allow for as law and law-likely enforcement.

That is, while this study does not ignore what the state-sponsored or state-normalized violence allows for, it does not deeply engage with the materiality of human-on-human violence. Rather, it equates war, unjust policing, poverty and eviction with ‘naturally occurring’ starvation, disease, flooding and lack of shelter– and names them all governmental force. This is not to naturalize them, to the contrary, it equates them all as governmental, demonstrating the particular way that force in general relates to human ways. Scholarship makes clear the social natures of (for example) disease<sup>397</sup> and food distribution policy<sup>398</sup>. And this study recognizes, too, that colonization, domination and dispossession are processes that purposefully pair book and sword. It’s just that state violence opens up a territory diametrically opposed to the sociality of the multitude that this cultural policy hopes to bring into force; in that way, attention to general violence remains loudly at the study’s margins.

## **2 Anthropologies and others**

### **2a The Multitude and its anthropology**

In relation to what has been left out, a refrain of the study has been the insistence on the fact that the multitude precedes and exceeds governance– that at every turn the multitude does things different than what governance, nature, culture and law expects. It also must be clarified that with this study’s particular focus on cultural production in relation to the politics of climate change for the multitude, towards these ends a multitude of things and relations have been excluded. The multitude exceeds the politics that this study is interested in. While all things are political, all things also exceed politics. The multitude can relate to law as if it were a bullet, a curiosity, a poison, a thing of beauty, a useful tool for specific ends, something sublime, or something hardly noticed. The same goes for all things in the world– while the ends of this study look towards culture to scaffold differing earthly relations for the multitude in the time of climate change, it does not ask culture to produce (for example) beauty, fun, or endless pleasure. Chapters 1 and 3 highlight how

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397 See for example, Harris & Siplon (2007), Shepard (2015) on the social nature of the AIDS crisis.

398 See for example Lappe 1998 for a general overview of the social nature of hunger and food scarcity.

the common processing of desired affects and their just causes is central to how the multitude comes to embody its own sociality, so they are clearly in the general interests of the study. They should be, as the multitude finds these and other affects generally and particularly meaningful. The room for error that is central to this study's ontology is constructed with these and other affects in mind. Yet for themselves, these affects exceed all multitudinous ends; any singular affect's unbound production through the technical and philosophical tools of culture is not of primary interests of this project.

A multitude exceeds, but also exists upon, the biopolitics and politics of governance— via governances of the self, home, family, town, agriculture, water, state, nation and world. The multitude exceeds these forms in its being one and many by never having to account for individual activity other than by affirming the possibility of it having happened or existing. The multitude may be in *whatever* niche for life there is, it also spins out from that niche in ignorance of what it leaves behind or with a decisive plan for something else. The multitude is in itself biologically, but grows and changes, gets weaker or stronger. It leaves itself in one way through death, another way during sleep, and another way during surgery. The multitude is, in itself and elsewhere, with its sociality— or not. Human beings are biological and social creatures; with the biology through which life happens, functioning beside the sociality that necessarily embeds being in a network of exchanges needed for the actual complexities of existence. The multitude's life is innately relational. The sociality of the multitude affords relations to be culturally structured from below or above or through equality: in that meaningful social reproduction is unaccountable by capitalism, it is nevertheless multitudinously tasked with organizing a future for capitalism (or other systems to which it is differently unaccounted) that it has little stake in. As discussed in the previous chapter, the unaccountability of sociality provides it with multitudinous freedom to move in other futures, within limits set by accounting structures such as whether or not those other futures are ultimately afforded through other means. Common sociality, built upon quotidian and particular exchanges within the multitude can destabilize or stabilize relations culturally structured from above; ultimately appearing as common care, common disobedience and revolt, or simply as warmth, sass, shade, or withdrawal. These exchanges are mostly unaccountable

because they are barely noticed until it's too late. Beyond freedom in the moment, the multitude determines the future to the extent that it finds an organizationality in difference to the law-likely effects of pre-existing governance by re-organizing common sense. Towards these unaccountable and socially reproductive ends, the multitude for itself can be described as feminist, anti-racist and queer. But towards other ends, it is also otherwise.

Besides this general definition of the multitude and towards the specific ends of this study— towards ‘a cultural policy of the multitude in the time of climate change: with an understanding that the multitudes have no policy’, the multitude bends and turns in *whatever* ways in relation to this policy that seeks to collaborate with it in the scaffolding or diminution of particular ways of being. That is, to the extent that the policy is written to organize cultural production rather than the multitude, the objects this policy organizes through cultural work aim to drive cultural lines within the multitude upon which for it to bend and turn beside and through and in relation to. As will be explained below in Section 3, these lines’ ends are in difference to the one that capitalism drives through the multitude. In the time of climate change, the ends that capitalism draws across the multitude drive the it into further dispossession and, along with all other planetary life, relentlessly towards death.

The anthropology that capitalism continues to drive to direct its response to climate change is the same one that continues organizing singular profit through multitudinous variability. That is, the anthropology of capitalism normalizes the biological costs of life in the favor of the material, financial and social enrichment of a few against the many of the multitude. But an anthropology of the multitude accepts the variability of climate, relations and life as a fact of its being. An anthropology of the multitude accepts that existential human need is variable over and in relation to itself and the world. In the time of climate change, to meet those needs, it pays to focus on a greater capacity for general flexibility towards those things that define need. This flexibility is achieved by a culture that is more intimate with the nature it fictionally sets beyond itself. The PAH’s ongoing dialog with its own situation demonstrates what this study means by intimacy, as it

demonstrates a creativity in ways to define and fulfill need. Rather than money and debt, for example, it needs *escraches* and accountability. Accepting this singular fact of the multitude, that its needs varies greatly in context and across difference is one way to think differently about the questions that have universal answers— as Ferriera da Silva asks her readers to do.

That any singular object can inspire universal difference is important to this study's interrogation of how widely distributed cultural forms can maintain meaning across context, and is at the heart of *whatever* universality. The concept of whatever helps think through how the same worldly matter can lead to different results over history. By suggesting that singular things can be both multitudinous and universal is to suggest that *whatever* allows things to be different from beginning to end but still have a universal function. This function might be that, regardless, *whatever* cultural thing is somehow universally relatable. Within the Chthulucenic world, autonomously directed cultural activity must assume that different things that result from its actions are not errors but just different answers to the same question. Responses are multitudinous to universally relatable activity. This is apparent in the same way that oxygen is universally necessary for humans to breath, but breathed at different rates for different activities towards different ends.

The variability of *whatever* thing in itself is echoed by the manners this cultural policy recognizes in the self-orientating moves of the PAH (see Section 4a), when it organizes itself in variable relation to itself and governance. While hoping to organize common experience, necessary cultural work should assume that whoever encounters its forms comes from different origins towards different trajectories. In the time of climate change against the singularity of accounted death, the multitude shares common material towards ends that simply are not finalized by naming the cause of death; a cause of death that nevertheless matters. Rather, the multitude in life and death surpasses the means that *whatever* object has allowed for, in multitudinous ways of being human, anthropologically.

As established in the last chapter, a cultural policy of the multitude provides room, to *whatever* extent, for error. The space for error allows for things that are less and more than mistakes, though not for governmental error. The room for error is for the multitude, which can be one or many; it is not for governance, that through the crisis of climate change demonstrates its limited capacity to properly govern. When governance is not held accountable for its higher order errors, it might hope to obscure itself through false equivalencies with the allowable errors of the multitude— governmental error kills and causes foreseeable suffering, multitudinous error is most often just foolish, and is ultimately forgivable. When governance errs, crisis capitalism steps in (cf. Klein 2008) and further fractures the commons, thus providing less room for common error. Climate change demonstrates that when governmental error occurs people die in untimely ways; when government is not held accountable, people continue to suffer. Here, governing and universal ideals of equality and justice continue to matter in ways that stand in meaningful tension with particular sociality that can be drawn to unjust, unequal and overarchingly violent relation.

Error has room through ecological and cultural means- these means provide social allowance for the space between law and life's actual living. Other thought attendant to climate change creates food security and systemic redundancy as material and technical room for error- this study concerns itself with social capacities. Sociality can experiment with conceptualizations of needs and their fulfillment in order to reorganize what are interests, and what is possible. In the face of systemic collapse, providing room for error can be ecologically translated into finding, organizing and allowing common margins within living systems in and through death. Providing room for error even in systemic collapse appears as allowance for social differentiation, variation, mutation, experimentation and play- with play understood as the varying space between co-dependent things. When sociality from below can play, vary, mutate, continue and differentiate within and with its governing margins, this is the formalization of a space for error: this is meaningful variation of the multitude. On these terms, critical judgment must continue to be applied towards law and law-likely governing structures.



## **2b A policy of the other**

Culture structures room for error with an awareness of under what terms and in whose interests law and law-likely governmental forms should be judged. Specific relation between the multitude and capitalist governance are discussed in Section 3a; the variable ways the multitude relates to governance is discussed in Sections 4a; and the way that culture positions itself in relation between governance and the multitude is conceptualized in section 4b. This section suggests overarching conceptualizations for how cultural workers can evaluate interests contingent to the managerial forms that they produce. In relation to those who forward interests are others whose relationality necessarily provides actors with an allowance for error— by being somehow necessary through providing care, reproductive labor or being in some other relation that matters. Meanwhile governance collaborates with capitalism when it legally nominates the singular individual as the only and irreducible point for either ownership, accountability or activity. An anthropology of the multitudes runs in difference to this singular nominationality, it is in the space around and beyond singularity where actual multitudinous being has room for error. Cultural work must be aware of this.

The tension between wanting to identify singular cultural forms that reshape the multitude and what are the multitude of things that frame this relationship can also be seen as the fictional knot of what is of supposedly ‘autonomous’ production. While certain discourses would suggest that autonomy is the special purview of art, the preceding demonstrates the common relations that structure autonomy— what is uncommon in autonomy is that its intended politics actually meaningfully play out as intended. Autonomy is both operative and fictional; being is relational and in practice the multitude’s one and many rely on the other as relationally necessary, even if they don’t acknowledge it. Cultural work in relation to the multitude must consider how other social interests collaborate in organizing meaningful spaces of livability. While the multitude is unaccountable, the temporal concerns of governance suggest a capacity to think about and be aware of the need to consider these others at the margin of meaningful appearance. This study thinks of two kinds of other: the intimate and distant.

1) The multitude is intimate with this first ‘other’. As discussed with Irigaray in Chapter 2, in whatever human project exists a non-negational dialectic that can be understood as the essential but non-essentialized relation of female and male. By non-essentialized, this relation refers to neither sex nor gender but to the acknowledgement of relational collaborations necessary for the making and sustaining of particular life. In other words, the other here is not only human; it is also what is called nature. By Irigaray’s telling, at the heart of any project stands an unknown and essentially unaccountable effort that nevertheless should be acknowledged in some way for its more-than-equal contribution to whatever that is. This intimate other suggests relations of necessary care and necessary performance that neither suggest who performs and who cares, nor does it predetermine towards what ends sustaining care is provided— all that intimacy suggests is that central to any identifiable thing are other constructs that exceed the formalized nature of what is being sustained. With an awareness of the intimate other which sustains momentary being, comes a sense that precarious being<sup>399</sup> is contingent to variable relations that seem to independently vary.

2) Second, within the general anthropology of the multitude are others that are in some way intimate but are also objectively far and distant. The first other is intimate, the second other is the most distantly conceivable possible other that may relate, and thus matter. They matter because by their distance it may become recognizable that their relation through otherness can be consequential. By consciously organizing on what terms to relate to something that can be seen as so foreign, this process organizes the space where thing inbetween becomes more familiar. Chapter 3, section 3c describes how despite the PAH’s near-criminal behavior, their common sociality maintains a general and popular support that crosses law-likely class and race-based difference. They manage to cross cultural lines through the common and general nature of their social work, appealing not to law but to a common sense that doesn’t end where familiarity does. The mediatic face of common sense is materially grounded in common experiences of common social conditions; with relationality worked through the common mediatic litter

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399 For more on this understanding of precarity see Butler (2004), Lorey (2015).

and detritus<sup>400</sup> that being produces. The PAH cares for “the whole” of their interests by making sure to produce action and images that translates to their most distant commonality. In so doing, despite their lawly criminal nature, the social fabric of their commonness reaches to the furthest possible other, and in so doing creating a social force that is able to counter law with common sense. So, in that the multitude can be either singular or multiple, acknowledging the necessity of this distant other is also central to the nature of the anthropology of the multitude.

### **3 Nature and culture**

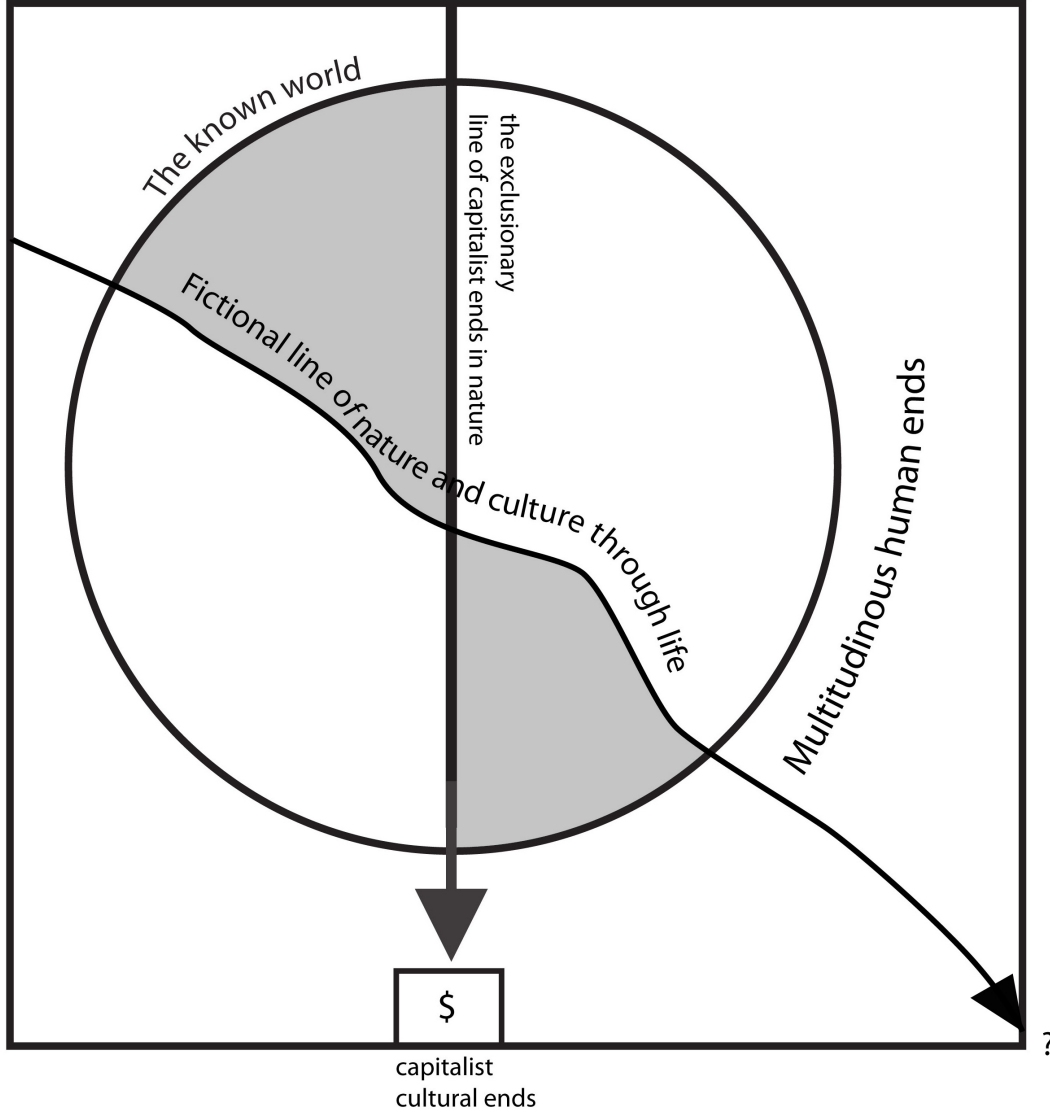
#### **3a Thinking for culture**

While the multitude suggests unaccountable relationality between the intimate and the other and between the singular and the collective, capitalism is perfectly clear about its relations with the other. The discussion of Jason W. Moore’s work in Chapter 4 clarifies that while many societies propose relationships between nature and culture, capitalism works by proposing that culture is external too and removed from nature. That is, while the anthropology of the multitude embraces an ultimately unknowable intimacy between the actor and the other, capitalism’s other is just an externality to be written off in an accounting book. The ends of life within capitalism are profit, all loss is externalized. Whatever nature is posed not as a necessary partner in the ongoing co-production of livable relations but as a cheap source for the ongoing reproduction of capitalism’s own model of profit extraction and reproduction. Nature is seen as only capable of silently giving, silently suffering or violently responding: capitalism recognizes this silence and violence as the nature of nature that justifies the fact of its externalization. With nature’s imagined externality, it doesn’t matter what happens to it. In the same way, the poor and dispossessed are understood as rightfully suffering in silence or violence with their nature. The dispossessed, as animals, as the poor and other; their bare life is imagined by capital as being nothing other than external noise to the system of extraction and ends of profit for the few. It results, nevertheless, in the continued dispossession of the many.

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400 The terms “litter” and “detritus” relate to how images and news, social media and memory joins the rich compost of common life, and relates to what is scaffolded in the niche over time.

The plain of multitudinous existence



 = the zone of activity for the cultural policy

Here, this study proposes a terrain to visualize where the cultural policy of the multitude is enacted. In total, this terrain is multitudinous life and its being over time— where the multitude of all life relates socially, biologically and culturally. Upon this terrain, the human project generally draws the useful fiction of nature and culture to govern its own activities within itself and in relation to the wider world. It is less a line and more a zone, unmarked field, sphere of interest, or just a fiction. This fiction narratively organizes particular niche building activities for the particular and general multitude- allowing for the accumulation of practices, knowledges and relations across lifetimes and generations. The niche allows for a buffer against privation, it provides room for particular error and possibility, orienting itself for future activity. The niche is particular like when it is analogous to a home, and it is general in that it is like an economy that regulates in its own interests in ecological exchange across the variety of scales that it connects. In that the niche can encompass all these things, it is a Chthulucenic mix of relations.<sup>401</sup>

What capitalism does in difference to this divide is to draw another line in contrapposto to this nature-culture divide— upon this other line capitalism extracts from nature in order to drive its ends in profit. Everything else is excluded as being something other and as having different or competing interests. Unlike the nature/culture divide, this conceptual line is a real line of profit. Many translate their own relationality across or through capital's nature/culture divide for their intimate needs and to orient their worldly relations. The multitude appears in relation to any law, and its relationality is often dependent upon lines of capitalist extraction. But capitalism claims to erase the need for being intimate with the reality of the world beyond. It suggests that it is able to account for all that needs to be attended to by suggesting that means only matter toward ledger-book ends in profit.

Within contemporary capitalism, life's intimate needs are variable not for life's own general multitudinous nature but for profitable ends through varieties of need— profit dangerously constrains, obscures or amplifies actual needs for systemic variability with

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401 All creatures construct their niches, so in some ways one can talk about the nature/culture divide of the bee colony through the work of, for example, Laubichler and Renn's (2015) discussions of eusocial insect colonies.

its own interests in variation that drives profit. This space between a fictional nature/culture divide that is intimate with both the human world and wider nature and the line that capitalism draws across the world for profit is the zone of the meaningful politics of this cultural policy.

The Barcelona PAH's experience sets a good example. Barcelona, its geology, geography, cultural histories, architectures, ways of being, laws, relations and its inhabitants fill the plain of multitudinous existence. The nature/culture line is real because the city exists in relation to the landscape but fictional because the lines of nature extend into the city and the city itself extends out into the countryside. Yet capitalist governance has drawn a line of dispossession across the city by extracting profit and the right to housing from those affected by banking issues. Through dispossession at the hands of capital, victims are left to silently suffer as external to its systemic and abstract interests. Nevertheless, a line of nature and culture that is more intimate with the actualities of relating within the city suggests that things could be otherwise, that housing and a social will to bring people to housing can exist: the homes are empty (or can be repurposed or built) and the social knowledge to keep or get people in them exists (or can be generated). Depression caused by being on the wrong end of capitalism's politics can be transformed into the will to organize towards other ends. Depression and other ways of being affected can be sensibly transformed into another way of processing politics, in the space that strives for intimacy with both its issues and the capacity to somehow address them— being between the issue and the space to address it is where cultural work actually crosses the fictional line between nature and culture.

The PAH's understanding that trauma can be transformed to activism demonstrates some of the space between capitalist dispossession from nature and a more genuinely fictive line between nature and culture. Depression, or other disempowered sensibilities, appear when dispossession suggests there are no other options, though the fictive nature/culture line demonstrates possibilities for other ongoing and variable narratives that can relate in other ways of being in the world. The fictive line can be fantastical, though notions prove their truth-value in actually being commonly effective, though towards any end. Moving

against the line of capital's extractive ends towards multitudinous ways and ends, to *whatever* extent, is the space in which this policy takes form. Any movement here, as the PAH's activity demonstrates, is scaffolded upon active cultural work.

A cultural policy of the multitudes needs cultural workers to enact this policy. This study assumes that there are self-selecting and interested actors who share its general goals. Formally speaking, as specific actors, these cultural workers leave the multitude in the instance of their labor, when pushing contours of cultural activity through the multitude. In that culture here is defined as having law or law-likely effects, culture is always in relation to something institutional- culture works by, through, for and against *whatever* institutional dispositif. The cultural distinguishes itself from the social by its longer temporality and more formal nature. More on the particular variability of the multitude in relation to culture will be discussed in Section 4- of importance here is simply that cultural work promotes and provides its own meanings through being formally or informally institutional. That is, between the multitude and individual cultural things are instituting dispositifs that enforce relational meanings with the multitude- as policy or in law-likeness. Cultural things get policed by the multitude (that is, subject to multitudinous meaning-networks) rather than governance when common sense suggests what is so is so. That is, as discussed in the previous chapter, *whatever* object's actual and immediate translationality can be affected through *whatever* system that provides for its meaning, including common sociality.

A work of art that seems to illuminate a political transformation may, years later, be buoyed only by its market value that is built upon an entirely disinterested system. Conversely, the fetish objects of cargo cults demonstrate how isolated cultures can read the quotidian detritus of Western society in dramatically different ways towards multitudinous ends. In many but not all ways, the nature of the institution from where cultural forms are generated matter less than through what system objects are translated, for it is through translation that the thing becomes policed. Here, things can be judged by how they enforce violence on others, distant and intimate. It is in how things work to policy their contingent meanings with the general multitudinous anthropology that comes

to matter. Towards this matter then, a cultural policy of the multitudes in the time of climate change sits beside or beyond capitalist interests. It is for others, rather than for capital that policies this culture.

### **3b For the multitude, the mirror of being in the world**

While cultural work suggests that it can consciously straddle the nature and culture divide to organize routines over time that are more intimate with the realities of both sides, the multitude responds as it does. It tautologically organizes what in the cultural is governmental, but the multitude must be understood as operating independently of culture. The multitude embodies a space of being, external but in relation to culture's governance. The multitude can be one or many because it is ungovernable and uncultured, though this does not mean that it is without governance or culture. Cultural forms as governing forms are tasked with consciously organizing relations to the other as multitude. The multitude and cultural forms mirror each other– but differently, for the multitude acts in actual relation while culture works in formal relation. Fluidly, cultural work forcefully shapes forms that the viscous multitude responds through and to. It is through the multitude's intimate or least law-likely social responses that it most directly embodies its own self-governance in time. The tautology suggests a balance in every form, but also forwards the conundrum of how within fixed systems, imaginal autonomy can make changes.

## **4 Rhetorics and manners**

The multitude responds or works in advance of natural/governmental/political force. This cultural policy facilitates the multitude's social work of commoning notions around what subjectifies or dispossesses it, in order to transform situations. The PAH, as a model for such work, demonstrates sociality re-orienting its relations to governing force. It bridges, scaffolds, counteracts, re-orientes or deconstructs relational capacities of governance.

Outside of the multitudes' social work, cultural work can provide frames and models of thinking through the variability of social relation with governing concepts. These cultural frames suggest ways in which intimate being commonly relates to governing forces that help or impede their being and becoming in and over time.



Bound in the knot between being and becoming, the embodied multitude relates to governances through itself and cultural forms intimately and generally. It is bound in the knot of the operative fiction between nature and culture, which is the human being in nature over time striving to differently relate to things in order to maintain some way within its worldly home. In that the multitude is tautologically singular and multiple, this binding operates as much through cultural projection across difference as it does in intimate and immediate sociality.

Therefore, this study identifies two frames for culture to think about the multitude's relationality. The first frame (section 4a) reiterates the social manners of intimate responses to violent governmental action. The second frame (4b) demonstrates general cultural approaches to how the social relates to governance. These are named rhetorical cultural frames.

#### **4a Manners by which the multitude embodies itself in crisis**

(Based on the organization for Chapter 3, Section 2 and 3)

1. The multitude works to recognize within itself the space between its own understanding of the worldly violence it has experienced and what and how culture and law have provided for it to feel and articulate its feeling.
2. The multitude socially organizes common notions within itself and others through the shared experience of violence as crisis; and relationally articulates these notions as common ways of being and becoming together in the world— beside or against or in other relation to the violence it has been experiencing.
3. The multitude socially works through these common notions with less intimate and more distant others in order to generalize and adjust its self-articulations to relate among the general commons, as common sense.

4. The multitude makes cultural law of its common sense, or organizes common action against laws that subjectify it.

#### **4b Rhetorics, or ways of addressing institutions of governance**

(Based on the discussion in Chapter 4, Section 3)

The cultural thought in this section provides rhetorical forms intended as scaffolding structures for the multitude's relational manners. In the way that dispositifs around art and culture formalize ways to relates, these rhetorics provide the multitude with common articulations for power relations that expediently scaffold multitudinous awareness towards transformations of governing relations. At the margins of this discussion is how cultural forms provide ongoing room for livability; of interest are the culture thoughts that provides succinct rhetorical thought to organize common ways to relationally work through governmental error. It is cultural forms' formality that allows them to appear autonomous— as their formal nature provides them with the integrity to stand in independence from the relations which their existence depends upon. These forms are first named in the discussions of Chapter 4, Section 3; each form specifically identifies conflictory relations within how capitalist culture organizes multitudinous life.

To deepen an understanding of the rhetorical approaches, the following section briefly sketches them with the additional work of critical theorists. This is to more concisely demonstrate how the cultural can work to scaffold particular relationality beside the multitude within the larger ongoing cultural/natural environment. While here critical theorists focus primarily on the objects of art, their reasoning can be applied beyond it. It is the relational nature of cultural forms in general that opens up particular creative ways of being to the wider world.

A) Culture can work to destabilize, destroy or close-off multitudinous relations to governing forms in the ways described in the work of Autonomist Marxist theory as discussed in the previous chapter.

In Gavin Grindon's (2011) essay, *Surrealism, Dada and the Refusal of Work* Grindon follows parallels between Berlin Dadaist activity and the Berlin's Spartacists during the insurrection of 1919. Within Berlin, Communist-aligned Spartacists were revolting against the Socialist Party that had been for decades collaborating with German national interests. The Socialists were clinging to power in effort to re-instate a governing normalcy on more conservative terms. For Grindon, the artistic avant garde works politically when it throws its lot in with the immediate and contingent processes of emergent subjectification that the Spartacists were driving. In this context, Dada organized a funerary parade to symbolically hold open the unsettled liminal moment—performatively amplifying the immediate sensual affects of insurrection against demands to settle for institutional Socialist politics.

Central to Grindon's narrative is Berlin Dada's ongoing refusal to make traditional artwork. Following Marx, Grindon suggests that with their refusal to work under traditional terms, these professional artists (and also striking workers) demonstrate the autonomous power of labor against the institutions that would order their particular ways of working otherwise. Here, within the sociality of the street, artists employed as “specialists in revolt” (84) make art that moves “outside or against capitalist relations.” (86) Grindon references Mario Tronti (1972) and Steve Wright's (2002) understanding that class is actively composed ahead of and in antagonism to relations with capital, and that composing class antagonism is active and always particular, sensuous and performative. Its non-cultured culture is its state of exception in advance of *whatever* law it aims to establish. Within Marxist logic, Grindon (2011) explains that class composition has two heads; it can be *technically* composed by the demands of capital<sup>402</sup> or *politically* (and in the discourse of this study, more multitudinously) through organization from below— in subversion, by refusal to work, and through worker self-organizations. (85)

Grindon rests the political ontology of this artistic refusal in a cultural dispositif organized through Kantian-informed notions on the value of disinterested play against the

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402 Technical composition organizes labor in relation to the managerial structures to service capitalist interests.

discipline of (artist) work time. (82–83) In the immediacy of this revolt, the Kantian logic may have provided structure the visibility of its artistic actors; beyond the moment's historicity and Grindon's ordering of it within art history, this study is unclear how the activity exactly relates to Kant or other philosophical thought. What remains are independent narratives and representations.

B) Culture can work to specifically frame places where the multitude can reinforce or innovate within ongoing institutional frames, in ways suggested by the previous chapter's discussion of Stakemeier and Vishmidt.

Informed by Modern Art's Institutional Critique, Marc J. Leger's (2012) *Brave New Avant Garde* does "not propose an escape from institutions but works towards the egalitarian transformation of institutions." (3) Leger builds upon Brian Holmes's recognition of the productive network of activist-artists that loosely collaborate between social movements and particular art institutions against the capitalist order of things.<sup>403</sup> Leger recognizes these cultural formations as supportive of artistic work that leverages precaritization and the fracturing of a cultural field across the precarious commons, as *social practice artwork*. This sphere explicitly stages an autonomy afforded by its network and allows for radical currents to be made visible across the broader cultural context.

Therefore Leger situates a critical art practices between institutions, the state of present (contingent) social relations and a universal ideal. For Leger, that ideal is a communism he defines as the non-coercive truth organizing affirmative and equal transformation of all people and social relations.<sup>404</sup> He sees universal thought providing critical wind to individuals working to maintain tensions between themselves as independent actors and

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403 "In an essay on the critique of institutions and the desire of radicalized artists to work outside the limits of established disciplinary structures, Brian Holmes argues that the most productive areas of contemporary critical art practice – discourse-based context art and institutional critique – have undergone a significant phase change, a shift toward extra-disciplinary, transversal assemblages that link actors from the art world to projects oriented toward political contestation." (Leger 2012)

404 See Leger 2013 12–16.

the institutions where they act within (67); unattended, this tension would allow institutions to biopolitically subjectify its participants. Leger sees much *social practice artwork* to be ultimately supportive of neoliberal biopolitics, and symptomatic of non-critical and anti-essentialist “utopian ideology of the left.” (Leger 2013 7-8) Against such affirmations of bland sociality, he supports artworks that are socially critical yet ultimately affirmative of the networked aspirations of what these progressive institutions desire to compose.

*Dark Mountain* is also critical of the biopolitics – of how contemporary capitalism prioritizes humanity over other forms of nature. Kingsnorth (2010) critiques normative green activism; “It is not about ecocentrism. It is not about re-forging a connection between over-civilized people and the world outside their windows. It is not about living close to the land or valuing the world for the sake of the world.” (58) With such universal damnation for civilization, Kingsnorth accesses universal logic through anti-human. The formally cultural nature of his journal, as discussed in Chapter 2, is central to the Modernist project and works between institutions to promote critical thought through means not so different from Leger’s. Though they express different analysis, both Leger and Kingsnorth utilize similar institutional structures for critique. Through their institutionality in relation to an abstract ideal, they provide the multitude with variable logics for further relational poesis.

C) Culture can work to specifically frame space for the multitude to make new connections beyond pre-existing institutional frames; as suggested in the previous chapter’s discussion of Afropessimism.

In her (2012) essay *Poetics, Commitment: Ayreen Anastas’s M\*Bethlehem and Pasolini Pa Palestine*, Art Historian Jaleh Mansoor points to a question Hannah Arendt (1979) raises in her essay *The Decline of the Nation State and the End of the Rights of Man*. Mansoor finds Arendt beginning with a simple question regarding the ongoing issue of dispossessed and stateless people: “how is it that he or she who could embody the rights of man as such, the stateless one, or the refugee, signals a legitimating crisis at the heart

of the concept of rights?” (73) Mansoor looks at Palestine and its virtually stateless inhabitants that formally exist only as a legal adjunct to Israel. Palestine’s utter contingency dispossesses it of an ability to set its own terms of existence – this situation having direct parallels to the situation of climate migrants. She quotes Adorno’s (1977) essay “Commitment” in relation to artworks whose effects obscure political tension without responding to the totality of their issues, saying they run the risk of “merely assimilat[ing] themselves to the brute existence against which they protest, in forms so ephemeral... that from the first days they belong in the seminars in which they end.” (78) The multitude is the becoming of other besides law; its praxis is not exhausted through submission to governance. Staying with the trouble of situations like Palestine’s demonstrates an intimacy with multitudinous capacities beyond pleas for relief from powers that cannot, will not, or just do not know how to actually end what they have begun.

Mansoor affirms an artwork by Ayreen Anastas that works through its Palestinian activist and poetic commitments,<sup>405</sup> and refuses to surrender to the immediate gratification of political trade-offs. Mansoor discusses Anastas’s *Pasolini Pa Palestine*, demonstrating how she creates a system where knowledges and representation are made to bear the materiality of their own limits – word and film present themselves as a singular object that ultimately can provide neither comprehensible knowledge or consumable form. The work escapes institutionalized meaning and avoids formal capture while still being aesthetically captivating, here the concretely poetic object of art falls like a stone that begs to be caught.

Mansoor affirms work made within political struggle that does not drive abstract laws through the multitude’s purely relational capacities. Rather, she points to cultural work

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405 Mansoor (65–68) ascribes to poetry a power to move people, and to do it in a manner that is not simply political in the sense described here. She traces a debate about poetry between poet Juliana Spahr and poet-theorist Joshua Clover. Spahr frames the instrumentality of political poetry as a debate between Adorno who Spahr sees as instrumentalizing politics within academia, against Brecht whose street poetry represents the living word and movement of the street. Clover begs to differ, asserting that while poetry does move people, it does not necessarily always move them in the way that activists would like, and that might be a good thing.

whose formal concepts and materiality elevates the multitude's capacities to socially relate to anything through and over law and law-likely culture and nature. By crossing simple laws of governance and allowing for the normal flows of relational sociality based on the mere fact that things might relate, individual humans seem to exceed themselves and their perceived, actual and imaginal horizons. Cultural work can provide frames to expand the multitude's relational horizon towards a variety of ends.

By applying these rhetorical approaches in relation to the possible embodied manners of the multitudes suggested above, the multitude moves from capitalist towards more multitudinous ends in this time of climate change.

### **5 Reiteration, closing statements**

A cultural policy of the multitude in the time of climate change understands that the multitude has no cultural policy, because when the multitude's social capacities become policy, they become law or law-likely and are no longer properly multitudinous. When there is law, the multitude will exceed it in some way. Thus, formally speaking, the cultural policy for multitudinous self-governance in the time of climate change is not written for the multitude but rather for those who would venture to collectively organize cultural frames, models and processes through which the multitude might relate towards particular but multitudinous ends.

Like a person composing themselves before a mirror, the multitude governs itself tautologically, as culture mirrors the multitude as a form of itself in self-governance. An anthropology of a truly global multitude utilizes the culturally institutional, scaffolded, organized human-natural and natural structures through which the multitude relates to and lives through towards multitudinous, rather than a singular, end. This is because the multitude does not agree on its means, how it will end, or what its endings mean. While subject to governmental law which it always exceeds, the global multitude recognizes no institutions and laws governing its total relational capacity other than those of its own sociality.

What is most proper to the multitude is its unaccountable sociality, which allows for its seamless transition from the one to the many and to many ones, without ever losing consistency. It is the multitude's embodied and unaccountable translationality that allows it to definitionally exceed itself. In the multitudinous world there is never any question of who acts— the multitude acts, in relation. There is never any question that results and responses to its action will create difference, but also that things will remain as they are and also be transformed. Accounting for what stays the same and what changes is situationally particular. The multitude's sociality provides the ontological terrain for the cultural ways of the multitude, regardless of climate change. Cultural work and the works of culture are the policed sociality of the multitude, where the multitude's habits and practices are given autonomous form by someone's common sense, and made enforceable in order to scaffold other particular ways of being multitudinous: in law or outside of it.

An anthropology of the multitudes in general is different from a cultural policy of the multitudes in the time of climate change because rather than trying to describe the general manners of generally being, policy attempts to organize particular ways of generally living in a specific time.

The Chthulucene brings into high contrast the culture policed by capitalism that continues to disallow and disable the material and ideational ways for multitudinous being and multitudinous ends. The culture attendant to capitalism that simply externalizes nature therefore forcibly limits the variability of the multitude by increasing the multitude's exposure to the violence and dispossession that nature's exclusion affords. The indeterminacy of multitudinous being and multitudinous ends mirrors the general indeterminate boundary between nature and culture that drives many human ontologies; the problem with capitalist culture is that it excludes nature from culture and vice-versa with righteous demands for proof of profit at *whatever* end. Within capitalism, the only variability that ultimately matters is profit. Chthulucenic climate change is meaningful because it reveals the total and brutal horizon of capitalism's limited means and ends, a cultural policy of the multitude functions, to the extent that it can, to limit the multitude's exposure to this violence. It does so in manners besides capitalist abstraction; rather, a



cultural policy scaffolds human social meaning and ends at the margins, against, under, beyond or in variable relation to capitalist ends.

Climate change paired with the social orderings attendant to capitalism disproportionately places violence upon those poorer than, darker than, other gendered than whoever drives such profit-interested laws. Climate change paired with capitalism has the ability, as studies have said, to drive near-term human extinction events, or just cause massive upheaval. With the intimate possibility for death regardless of *whatever* sociality, this study clings to conceptualizations of multitudinous ends. It is the multitude's experience of climate change that matters. If life ends by the singular violence of capital, the multitude regardless has ends that exceed this death.

In actually intimate experiencing of governmental force, the multitude embodies the violence capitalism expresses. Within itself, the multitude embodies a variety of relational perspective to reorganize its own common-sense relations to such expressions. By working through *whatever* common notions in ongoing cultural relation, the multitude socially organizes its means and ends attendant to *whatever* regulatory forces it identifies as meaningful self-governance. Cultural workers can amplify the multitude's embodied relational manners by providing cultural and rhetorical frames to expediently maneuver other relational ways to governing force. Cultural work makes emotional, socio-cultural, and environmental room for error in common practice and at life's margins by culturally framing other relations to governance. An allowance for error is the ethical task that proper governing forms allow at the margins of life. Governmental force that leads to unforgivable violence is bad governance, not forgivable error.

As such, a cultural policy of the multitude:

- 1) Recognizes that the multitude precedes and exceeds and also necessarily exists in relation to governmental forms. The multitude either lightly carries or is terribly burdened by governance. Through its independent sociality, the multitude becomes both one and many in relation to, and in excess of, such governing forms.

2) The multitude varies in variable relation to all forms of governance; which are both natural and human-natural (i.e. cultural) forms of law and law-likely enforcements of behavior. Multitudinous sociality becomes culture when its ways become as policed forms of law and law-likely behaviour attendant to whoever's interests, and articulated as somehow common sense. Culture allows for particular ways of social being over time.

3) The problem of culture attendant to capitalism in the time of climate change is how, regardless, it enforces ways of proper being, that recognizes violence as external to its own profitable systemicity. Climate change suggests that the need for multitudinous variation through sociality, law and law-likely culture will increase. The problem of culture attendant to capitalism is that its proper ways of being human exact violence upon the world by disallowing other's ways of variation.

4) Sociality informed by this policy works to undermine, replace, stand beside or beyond the violent line of capitalist cultural law, and acts to move the margins for life towards ways and ends that contain possible margins for error. (Section 3A contains a schematic visualization of this point.)

5) Culture informed by this policy necessarily relates to the other that co-produces marginal spaces for error, at the heart and margins of its policy practice (see section 2B above). Error is understood as forgivable in its foolishness. Unforgivable errors occur when governance does not follow through with universal ideals aimed at caring for life.

6) A cultural policy of the multitudes in the time of climate change is energetically policed by an anti-capitalism that is informed by feminist and queer thought.

7) The multitude intimately experiences the violence of nature and culture's governing forces as governing force. The multitude responds to governing force in social and other ways, multitudinously. Through its own sociality, the multitude reorganizes its relations with governing force. The study uses the PAH to model the manners in which the

multitude embodies and reorients its own governing relations in response to violence. Section 4A's framework rearticulates how the multitude socially reorients its own being and becoming.

8) The being and becoming of the multitude exists in the knot bound at the fictional line of nature and culture, where sociality nominates cultural ways of utilizing natural cultural relations to govern itself in relation to the rest of the world.

9) In relation to how the multitude reorients its social relations to governance, culture can provide frames to scaffold multitudinous relationality to governance. Section 4B provides a set of rhetorical frames constructed with contemporary critical thought aimed to culturally sets relations to governing force in pure antagonism, in critical relation, or in open connectivity. Particular sociality will relate to cultural frames as it will, multitudinously. These rhetorical forms relate to the variable ways the multitude works through its own common notions (as self-governance) by being ways and means for the multitude to think through its relations to nature's powers as culture (as governance).

10) These and other cultural forms are universal not because they suggest singular truths, but simply because they may be universally relatable by a human multitude with differing beginnings and ends. They are means for *whatever* relation.

11) Throughout history, the multitude has operated towards multitudinous anthropological ends, living in *whatever* particular relationships between nature and culture. This relationality is properly informed by and in dialog with the most distant knowable other that it must somehow meaningfully relates. This is partially so that margins remain for the other, not for profit.

12) There is no way 'back' to previous ways of being multitudinous. Multitudinous ends always, rather, suggest particular ways of being in common relation to all that it might be contingent to in the moment and beyond. These ways suggest multitudinous rather than singular ends; regardless of whether or not extinction level events occur. In *whatever*

manner, ways of being are organized to meaningfully exist in some form, today or tomorrow.

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