

'Techniques for Living Otherwise': Naming, Composing and Instituting Otherwise

It is always rather strange to talk *about* radical pedagogy, it being predominantly something we do, something we do with others, a praxis that - in spite of the often heroic language attributed to it - we struggle with doing against all the odds. Nonetheless, having spent some years with my nose in archives and in the streets attempting to think about what the legacies, the intergenerational inheritances of radical pedagogy have to teach those of us working and learning in both community organising and the arts, I will make some modest attempt to share some them with you here.

The title of this text, 'Techniques for Living Otherwise' comes from a movement of teachers led by Elise and Celestin Freinet and a cooperative network of pedagogues working in rural primary schools in 1930s France. The Ecole Moderne or 'Freinet' movement practiced these 'techniques' emphasising the relationship between **emancipatory methods** and the production of **emancipatory life conditions**. Their commitment was to transform at once teaching, learning, the institutions they inhabited and the contexts that surrounded them.

In our current set of conundrums, when so many discussions of emancipatory education in arts organisations under the title of the 'educational turn', over-emphasise techniques and histories of radical pedagogy to the near neglect of life conditions - those in the rooms that we are gathered in and of those who are excluded from them - this pairing is significant. Indeed many cultural institutions are guilty of outright neglect of lived conditions, privileging discussions of emancipatory pedagogy and political theory over the long and laboured work of addressing their own precarious and sometimes violent governing structures, ties to global oppressors and poor existential provisions. Questions of life, how it is produced and by whom, while thematised regularly in the discursive contexts of the arts, are often shunned, literally relegated to the dustbins of and by institutional hosts at a time when basic survival of the precarities of the present take centre stage for most cultural workers and the wider communities in which they operate.

We might characterise some of these missed encounters between what is spoken about and what is addressed in the art field, by way of an age-old tension: between an *alternative* education, with its primary focus on the development of experimental methods and tools, and a *radical* education, which posits pedagogy as a practice of broader social agency and protagonism, challenging the hierarchical and exploitative foundations of the society in which education takes place. From this perspective, we must address the fact that in the years that we have been discussing education more openly in the arts, the educational landscape has steadily deteriorated. We must confront that the educational turn's aims, to put pressure on —or provide alternatives to—the current system of education, read generously as more than simple attempts to bolster personal CVs, have largely failed to make real headway in these contexts. Among the several reasons for this, is, I would argue, are two prominent ones. First, the absence of a deep and sustained interrogation of the life and labour conditions that surround arts and cultural organisations and second, the failure of cultural institutions to generate contexts that link discussion of education in the arts to broader-based social movement building in this and other areas. We have not taught ourselves to sufficiently answered the question, how can the arts progress the project of social and institutional transformation on the ground?

Reading across Ecole Moderne, their informants in post-revolutionary Soviet education and other radical education genealogies, including Pedagogy of the Oppressed, the popular pedagogies of the Latin America Alforja Network, in this talk I'm going to look at three 'techniques for living otherwise' that emerge around three different modes of grounding world and movement - making techniques. The first is that of NAMING. The second is that of COMPOSING. The third is that of INSTITUTING.

While re-visiting pedagogies from such multiple contexts and complexities, I am not reading them as equivalent, but rather reading *across them* to chart a particular trajectory around the intersection of social reproduction, movement building and creative or cultural work that might be useful to inform arts educators and social justice workers operating today. Considering these three intersecting interests together seems crucial at a time when the ramifications of pedagogical reform (debt-induced anxiety, a culture of competitive, individualised and yet uncertain and precarious work, growing class divisions, and aggressive urban polarisation) affect our ability to survive in ways that are materially, immaterially and ethically live-able.

It must be said that these genealogies, unlike many of those resurrected by the educational turn and more recent activities staged on the anniversary of the Bauhaus, were not produced within the frame of art, design or cultural education *per se*. Rather their commitment to political change caused them to displace the idea of art as a detached category of production in favour of creative practices of cultural practices oriented towards coordinated movements of social justice and change. Artists within them often turned their back on the art world, or were turned upon, in order to pursue these aims.

Art, artists and creativity (though not in the neoliberal, creative economy sense) operate here transversally, to convene multiple constituencies and approaches to political, social, aesthetic and pedagogical questions. This positioning seems particularly pertinent today, when we are searching so deeply for effective modes of resistance to such deep and intersecting modes of oppression, exploitation and cynicism. So, rather than a shift in arts education *per se*, in this talk I am advocating for what Isabel Stengers described as an 'ecology of practices', a convention of all practices - including creative ones - that we need to come to bear on the deep seeded problems that we face in the current moment.

NAMING

Once named, the world re-appears to the namers and requires of them a new naming.' -Paulo Freire ²⁵⁶

The first of the dimensions of this ecology that I want to explore is the practice of naming. While it is common in the halls of arts institutions and art schools to hear discussions of neoliberal double-speak, fake news and post-truth environments ending in the question 'do we need new terms?', in the field of radical pedagogy, this question has had a very particular resonance. Beyond the creation of experimental dictionaries, glossaries and witty neo-logisms, the relationship between words and worlds, between naming and the agencies of what and who has been named, has developed through a body of work that has emerged since the 1960s under the headings 'popular education', 'education for critical consciousness', 'political analysis for action' and the 'pedagogy of the oppressed'. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the title of the influential book written by Brazilian literacy educator and activist Paulo Freire in 1969, here, often stands in as the articulation of what subsequently became a movement of popular educators in the global south for whom naming was an ongoing practice of committing to counter colonial and counter dependency struggles. Naming, however, was not understood as a standalone practice but was inextricably tied to committed action against intersecting forms of oppression. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and other books by Freire, he outlines a detailed process for moving from assigned terms to practices of collective naming based in reflection, analysis, and from there towards actions that respond to the concrete conditions of the namers. He understands this process as a the creation of 'generative' words and themes as a form of reading the world that in turns 're-writes the world'.¹

Subsequent workbooks and pamphlets developed by popular education practitioners across the Americas in the wake of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, place significant emphasis on the power relations at stake in

¹ Paulo Freire and Loretta Stover, 'The Importance of the Act of Reading,' *The Journal of Education*, Vol. 165, No. 1 (Winter 1983): 10.

the process of naming conditions. What, for example, are the conditions under which the *naming* of a situation takes place? What are the conditions of this room, this relation? And how do we come to the themes and questions from *here* that frame our discussions and struggles? Conditions here are not only local but, as the Argentinian Collective, *Collective Situaciones* suggest, 'situational'.

The work of popular educators in 70s and 80s Latin America can be read against the presence of military dictatorships, and encroaching neoliberal economic policy, but also a rejection of both NGOs and the metropolitan Communist Left, all of whom, were in the habit of 'naming' the problems and conditions of poor and rural communities. The practice of naming, through rigorous and committed processes of being together, resisted language imposed from above, in favour of that which emerged from situational conditions below. These practices of naming ran alongside the movement of liberation theologians and their 'preferential option for the poor' in which clergy situated biblical teachings within practices of solidarity, 'against inhumane poverty'.²

Beyond the Church, these educators joined a subset of communist organisers, including Carlos Marighella,³ one of the main proponents of armed urban guerilla struggle in Brazil, who resisted the notion that liberation should conform to the ideas and strategies of the metropolitan Left, and be rather must be articulated through the analysis of 'the base' of the opposition: those workers, peasants, women, students, priests, Bishops and youth, who experienced state violence most profoundly and whose experiences rarely figured in political analysis, even of the radical kind.

Freire and his students often compared the agrarian literacy guides sent from city to country through the extension programmes of the urban universities to the Communist leaflets sent from Sao Paulo to circulate in the northern province of Parnambuco where he taught. They found something similar in the qualitative infrastructure they employed. Where in the case of the former, *the people* were imagined to learn the words of a technocratic urban middle class to become more productive agrarian workers, in the latter they were to take action vis-à-vis the existing pending revolution.⁴

There are resonances between this scenario and that adopted by many arts institutions, who separate practices of naming, of theoretical investigation, of public platforming and debates, from the conditions of those most affected by them, and indeed from their own patrons, supply chains and boards, members of whom often play a role in the shaping of the very social oppressions discussed.

For Freire and his students, their first acts of naming were often related the classroom itself, on the role of the teacher and the hierarchies of teaching. Where this is often equated with the position of the teacher outlined in Rancière's *Ignorant Schoolmaster*,⁵ in which the teacher Jacotot steps aside and allows his students to teach themselves, it would be more accurate to say that Freire's naming practices re-positions the role of the teacher, making the uneven and problematic relationship between student and teacher the basis for the generation of terms, analyses and, eventually, provocations and transformations of this and other relations of oppression. It is only when both teacher and student 'address their act of cognition towards the

² According to Peruvian theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez, whose book 'A Theology of Liberation' put this term into circulation, the 'preferential option for the poor' was laid out through meetings of the Latin American Church spanning from Medellín (1968) to Puebla (1979) in relation to growing poverty and social injustice in the region. See Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* (New York: Orbis, 1973); and Daniel Hartnett, 'Remembering the Poor: An Interview with Gustavo Gutierrez,' *America Jesuit Review*, February 3, 2003, accessed July 3, 2017, <https://www.americamagazine.org/issue/420/article/remembering-poor-interview-gustavo-gutierrez>.

³ Marighella resigned from the Executive Committee of the Brazilian Communist Party in 1967 accusing the leadership of upholding an 'un-Marxist and un-dialectical', monolithic 'kernel of leadership' disconnected from the base of people in struggle, with particular reference to workers, peasants, women, students, priests, Bishops and youth. Carlos Marighella, *For the Liberation of Brazil* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1971), 185.

⁴ Freire, 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed': Chapter 3.

⁵ Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*.

object by which they are mediated,' (in this case, the power relations of education) Freire suggests, 'that literacy can take place'.⁶

Naming relations of dependency and collectively struggling against them here positions popular education as a tool of *organisation* as much or more than one of *education*.

For this reason Freire's work became most significant when associated with organizing efforts and political actions undertaken by grassroots struggles in South and Central America in the 1970s. Such movements were deemed popular, because they took, 'a clear stand in support of the hopes and aspirations of the vast majority of the people in South and Central America' i.e. the poor.⁷ Popular education served practices of organisation both before liberation, in the mode of consciousness raising as in the case of Brazil, but also operated alongside armed struggles, for example in the movement Sandinistas in Nicaragua and in liberation movements in El Salvador. In Nicaragua, a massive literacy crusade drawing on 100,000 volunteers taught 400,000 people how to read and write, reducing the rate of illiteracy from 51% to 12% in just 6 months, while at the same time supporting the attempts of communities to re-organise the power relations that shaped their lives.⁸

Popular education was also a strategy for post-liberation social re-organisation in Tanzania and in Guinea Bissau, where the praxes of naming the word and the world were implemented as part of the process of massive de-colonial social re-organisation. Paulo and Elza Freire and others involved in the IDAC group of the World Council of Churches in Geneva spent the years from 1970-79 as collaborators with the post-revolutionary government of Guinea Bissau on their first articulation of an anti-colonial pedagogy for the liberated state. In letters written to the then Commissioner of Education, Mario Cabral, the group suggested that the emergent thought-language born of a literacy informed by the life conditions of the liberation struggle had to move beyond the confines of education or schooling *per se* but with and as the re-organisation of the means of production and reproduction of society. In these letters, Freire is clearly humbled by the achievements of Guinea Bissau revolutionaries and clarifies through what he has learned from them, the difference between *language literacy*, the technical work of determining more relevant terms for the purposes of people learning to read and write and *political literacy*, which includes language literacy, but is broader, involving the re-organisation of social life and relations of power as they articulated themselves in the everyday through practices of solidarity.⁹ *Political literacy*, Freire suggested, could only be realised within the context of 'universities of the people' built to marry questions of social, agricultural and earthly reproduction with those of intellectual and linguistic pursuit.¹⁰

This sentiment is echoed in 'Naming the Moment', the title of one of the workbooks of the Alforja Network - a network of popular educators working across the Americas in the 1980s. In it community organizer, Deborah Barndt suggests that naming is a crucial step in movement building that allows for the various threads and scales of a problematic to be woven together. Naming as she suggests is 'looking at the web of different forces... determining opportunities for action,'¹¹ but it is also the practice of 'organisation, commitment, and the capacity and desire to pass on strategies to those within their communities'.¹² Naming the moment draws from Antonio Gramsci's notion of 'conjunctural analysis', a process that entails elaborating limit situations through, 'the interplay of economic, political, and ideological forces at a given moment, and how

⁶ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 73.

⁷ Rick Arnold and Bev Burke, *A Popular Education Handbook* (Toronto: OISE Press, 1983).

⁸ *ibid.*, 18.

⁹ It should be noted that these ideas were not only based on Freire's ideas or past experiences but the learning of the IDAC group from the work undertaken in the liberated zones of Guinea Bissau. Education programmes established within liberated territories graduated more students in the ten years of the war for liberation, than in five centuries of anti-colonial rule that pre-ceded them, but also, by necessity, developed strong relations between re-productive questions around the organisation of life and resources and questions of literacy and thought in the academic or 'schoolled' sense. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy in Process: The Letters to Guinea-Bissau* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016), 10.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹¹ Deborah Barndt, *Naming the Moment: Political Analysis for Action: A Manual for Community Groups* (Toronto: The Moment Project, 1984), 7.

¹² *ibid*

one country, sector, or organization fits into the global process.’¹³ In addition to the geopolitical conjuncture, however, workbooks like ‘Naming the Moment’ also include activities for producing group affects, trusts and capacities to not only expose and analyse shared conditions but also to move into practices of committed change with one another. Within them are blank organisational charts with suggestions on how to generate tasks according to capacities, guides to assessing work loads in the labour of social transformation, and of distributing these more equally. Naming ‘the moment’, is then understood as profoundly situated in the present, in the tributaries that have brought us to the conjuncture and speculatively, in the worlds that are to be built from the site of a named problem.

bell hooks, in her reading of popular education and the work of Freire, suggests that we begin the work of education from the fundamental contradictions of the spaces we inhabit, their production and re-production, the micro and macro political dimensions of life and organization. She suggests that, in using popular and democratic education strategies we begin from within our own oppressive conditions, we learn how to think and generate these intersecting relations — at the level of the articulation of words, groups and intersubjective relations. Here the generation of the word aligns social production and reproduction in ways that help us rethink how organising efforts based in popular education have taken up questions of both the public and ‘the private’ more actively, but also have they have used this as the basis for linking to wider social movements. It is the practice of solidarity, she suggests, that makes us more equipped to battle the violently barbed apparatus that underpins neoliberal education reform, returns to disciplinary and research conservatism and other disasters of late neoliberalism.

COMPOSING : Pedagogies of Life-Work

If, in the detailed practices of naming described above, we find what is often missing in the discussions we have about education in the arts, in preceding movements, like Ecole Moderne, we might locate the technicalities of how we might come to new practices of institutional analysis and re-composition.

These concerns were central to the Ecole Moderne movement, which emerged in the Paris Commune in the 1870s and developed in Britain, Spain and the US in the early 20th century, and again in the reinvention of forms of life in a rural primary school in Vence in the 1930 with the work of Celestin and Elise Freinet.

Very much committed to radical proletarian education, the Freinets were successful in forming the large scale “Modern” or “Freinet” School Movement across France. The Ecole Moderne Movement led councils in regular decision-making processes and learned, through testing, “techniques for living”—collectively organized agricultural, creative, academic and care work in and outside of the school. Reversing the idea that communist education must engage with the working-class site of production, i.e. the factory, they brought an industrial machine—a printing press—into the centre of the school to focus literacy education on the emergence of students’ experiential readings and critiques of the world. Students started with oral descriptions of activities in the school and moved on to their imagined worlds, life in their broader community and the councils through which they organized their own activities, using the co-operatively run printing press as an impetus to make sense of their questions and observations, learning to read and write in the process. Students’ “free texts” were derived from these oral descriptions and were used as the basis for pamphlets and newspapers that would inform subsequent students about the things they had learned and the questions that had emerged. The constitution of an aesthetic for communication—the layout of the papers and pamphlets and the drawings they contained—were key issues for student councils in their collective decision-making, alongside questions of the reproduction of life at the school. The printing press also required that they organize the terms and narratives they had made and intricately connect literacy skills to practices of democratized creative production.

Each school attended to social reproduction through daily routines and collective decision-making about the life of the school and their community. The Ecole Moderne network, however, which placed in hundreds

¹³ Arnold and Burke, *A Popular Education Handbook*, 32.

of schools an industrial apparatus that served both social reproduction and movement building, marked a significant departure from previous experiments, which had been either short-lived or attributed to a single site or pedagogical auteur, like Summerhill in the UK. Having set up the union of teachers in 1926, the Freinets were seasoned organizers, and they supported students and teachers in circulating the newspapers and pamphlets generated in the schools, opening them up to their local communities and to other schools. This system of knowledge exchange among Ecole Moderne schools enabled students and teachers to learn from each other's organizing practices and contribute to wider movement building, in addition to the porosity they had created between the school and its wider community.

The Ecole Moderne program was developed for primary schools and did not, until somewhat later, have obvious application for adults or broader social movement politics. In the late 1950s, however, the educator Fernand Oury and psychoanalyst Aida Vasquez applied aspects of the program in urban secondary schools and in young adult life education courses. In these programs, Oury and Vasquez also worked through the councils of students and teachers, inviting them to rearrange various aspects of the school and their lives, with stronger attention to the psychological impact of addressing power relationships encoded in school bureaucracies. He coined the term "Institutional Pedagogy" to denote the ways in which institutions could be performatively and creatively made and unmade, even moulded, by addressing their "hidden curricula."¹⁴ Oury was connected to the hosteling network, through which he influenced a generation of young political organizers, including then student activist Felix Guattari, who took some of these experiences into mobilisation in 1968, and went on, with Fernand's brother Jean, to experiment with some of the same mechanisms of institutional re-composition and programming through the practice of Institutional Psychotherapy developed at the La Borde Clinic.¹⁵ Here, practices of re-composition, of groups, tasks, insides and out-sides, re-contextualised the institution of education and the clinic as plastic, akin to what Guattari described as a 'moulding clay'.

INSTITUTING OTHERWISE : New Pedagogies of Culture-Work

Against the backdrop of the longer term discussions of 'Institutional Critique' and more recent ones around 'New Institutionalism', these strategies of re-composition and institutional moulding offer significant alternative to a) questions of the inside and outside of institutions and b) the question of what and who makes an institution. Within Institutional Pedagogy and Psychotherapy, the institution is understood not only as the bricks and mortar, the sociological or architectural structures that 'house' particular programmes, and reach out to particular 'communities', but as all the habits, written and unwritten laws, programmes and procedures that circulate around a particular set of practices. A change to the composition of a working group, an activities rota in which staff and so-called 'participants' switch roles, the forging of stronger links around a particular problem or issue and the constituents this activity composes, are all constitutive of 'the institution'. In arts organisations, a re-focusing on the work of re-making institutional roles and procedures in relation to particular issues or problems to be addressed would therefore be the re-making of the institution. How could the re-arrangement of organisational dimensions (or programming) around principles of democracy, porosity and in relation to the most pressing issues of a region, be privileged over new architectures and expansive, neo-colonial programmes of many cultural spaces today?

For the Freinets, and the practices of Institutional Analysis that built from them the principles of re-composing organisational detail as the basis and not the 'trickle down' of social change was drawn from Soviet post-revolutionary pedagogists like Nadezhda Krupskaya and Anton Makarenko. From them, the Freinets learned to depart from a communist education centred on existing workplaces, like the factory towards a

¹⁴ Through analysis of this "hidden curriculum" groups were able to address relations of power and practices of convention in the school among students, teachers, administrators, cleaners, and parents. By reworking the performances that compose the school's institutions—who speaks and who listens, what is spoken of and what is not, who plays what role or performs what task—it was possible to alter both pedagogical and psychological domains against institutional violence. J. Pain *Institutional Analysis in Encyclopédie Universelle*. (Paris: 2005, 2005), 2.

¹⁵ Many young people were politicized through Freinet's and Oury's programs and those of Oury's brother Jean, who developed similar ideas in the field of psychiatry. Among them was Félix Guattari who met Oury in his local school and went on to organize politically both within education and psychiatric settings.

communist education routed in creative autonomy. Building on the writings of Dewey, Olstoy and others, thinkers like Krupskaya, who was Lenin's partner, a teacher and author of eleven volumes of propositions for a post-capitalist education program (mostly untranslated into English), understood education as the convening of theoretical and practical skills to realize "... a rational, full, beautiful and joyful life in society." Far from seeing work within a pedagogical context as simply agricultural or industrial—and learning as a training for employment—the role of education was positioned here as "a tool for the transformation of contemporary society" 16 and its social relations, based in collectivity, individuality and practices of mutual aid.¹⁷

At the centre of the pedagogical proposition of Krupskaya and others were principles of self-management and a micro-political attention to the relationship of students and teachers with each other and with the world outside of their classrooms. Recognizing that such assertions were made by many pedagogical theories but seldom realized on a large scale, Krupskaya suggested practical interventions around the organization of time in schools. "We should not overwhelm pupils," she suggested, "...and should leave them sufficient time for independent work, rational exploration, organization of collective life in school, [...] physical work [to maintain the school] and active involvement in daily [social] life"¹⁸. While the notion of "way of life" education, that is education that would enable students to learn through life practices, was not uncommon in the preceding education theories of Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, Maria Montessori and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the emphasis by Krupskaya on the re-balancing of the relationship between production and reproductive relations, of learning to be collective, to produce a commons and to engage in both care and analysis of the community was unique¹⁹. In her address to the Young Pioneers in 1927, Krupskaya suggests a departure from party formalism and towards mutual knowledge and support of group member's life conditions and analysis of these conditions, alongside group-building activities like singing. Krupskaya's suggestion that time and conditions must be altered in order to valorize the social, communal and reproductive aspects of life were indicative of her search in readings of Marx and Engels for questions of social reproduction, but also an early indication of attention to what feminists would later amplify—the concept of reproductive labor—proposing the recognition of unwaged caring and facilitative work as the "determining force" ²¹of both capitalist labor power and post-capitalist imaginaries.

This expansion of the notion of the work of the institution was not to result in the abdication nor abolition of teachers (just as the current discourse of student-led teaching is not driven by cost-saving measures), but rather a re-purposing of their work to support students to "organize themselves" and their interactions within the broader society. This facilitative role was to be socially and economically valorized: teachers' salaries were increased and their status promoted as key agents for embedding the reproductive and analytic pursuits of the school within the localized processes of social transformation. For Krupskaya, every aspect of self-management of students was to be creative—both within independent exploration and in productive agricultural or mechanical labor. Drawing on her readings of Marx, she suggested that creativity should infuse all labor, and work should never be fixed into strictly "mechanistic" tendencies.

In this way, the school was as much a preparation for the world as it was a prefiguration of a coming society in which questions of care and community were driving forces for the production of life in all its dimensions. Far from the mantra of employability that floods the halls of European universities, the pedagogy of work promoted by Krupskaya and others was not training for industrial or agricultural labor in itself so much as probing the possibilities of work of producing life on more equitable grounds.

16 N. Krupskaya. *Pedagogiceskie socinenija v 11 tomah [Educational Works in Eleven Volumes]*, vol. 2 (Moscow: APN-RSFSR, 1957–1963), 11.

17 N. Krupskaya, *On Education* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1927/1957), 121.

18 *Pedagogiceskie socinenija v 11 tomah [Educational Works in Eleven Volumes]*, vol. 3 (Moscow: APN-RSFSR, 1957–1963), 44

¹⁹ My use of the commons here is specific, referring to 'a thing made and remade through collective activity...not a resource or even necessarily a place. It is what we could call a condition of life'. See <https://www.weareplanc.org/blog/wtf-is-the-commons-ff17-input/>

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Engels' statement, "The determining force in history is the production of and reproduction of life" is quoted by later feminists including Sylvia Federici in *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle* (New York: PM Press, 2012).

This, however, would take time. A contemporary of Krupskaya, Anton Makarenko, generated the concept of the “ten-year school”²² as a recognition that profound educational and institutional change would require a durational commitment, as would the organization of daily life. To leave time for discussions about the direction of the school, its community and for “independent” interests, students and teachers were to spend no more than four hours per day doing any kind of formal study.²³

For both Krupskaya and Makarenko, freedom and creativity are posited within the complex interplay between student councils and different forms of time and labor as a pedagogy based on collective negotiation and re-composition of roles in relation to particular questions and issues.

This is an important dimension to consider in relation to notions of creative freedom that have underpinned cultural labour in the last decades, as something outside of institutions and their administrative procedures, as determined by the autonomy of the individual, or by the accumulation of reputational and virtuosic capital, or as something that is brought, by arts organisations, to communities. To understand creative work as the work of re-shaping institutional programmes and procedures in relation to social issues and movements, would be a profound but also plausible shift for arts organisations who stage events and publicly oriented programmes towards questions of education and social change.

A Final Note

There are several reasons why we might be skeptical of the examples I have discussed and why their experiences are not perfectly adaptable to current conditions. We can now see how ideas like the pedagogy of work, student-centered learning and the tools outlined in the pedagogy of the oppressed have been bent to the rationalization of education, participatory corporate training, and the state’s ushering in of “popular” policies that progress and protest corporate interest. (One thinks here of the exercises used by city councils to falsely “consult” the people on issues that have clearly already been decided by corporate elites). We can also hear in the demand—put forward by all of these examples—for a creative re-working of life and the prefacing of literacy, and generative naming, a faint echo of what Boltanski and Chiapello have cited as an excessive reliance on the “artistic critique” rather than the “social critique” of the ‘68 generation.²⁴

What are absent in these various co-optations of the practices that I have considered here, is a commitment to the production of post-capitalist imaginaries qua realities at the micro and macro scales of social relations. This applies just as much to the time and process that must be expended for change to be implemented, i.e. the ten year school; to the mutual development of social process and care; and to attempts to use education to build the power of anti-capitalist movements and challenge the persistence of colonial and center-periphery paradigms. The use of art, its practitioners and institutions to further these projects all point to the kind of arts educational movement we need.

Having worked with such commitments and genealogies over the last decade, at one of the great epicenters of neo-liberal and colonial art and violence, I am under no illusions that this work is simple. But in our time, where social movements are facing massive challenges, pedagogical projects that take place in the form of temporary and fleeting experiments are often nothing more than glimpses in the circus-mirror corridors of dissociated practices. We must constantly mark the difference between these passing interests and those which place themselves in the trajectory of a sustained, committed movement, regularly cultivating collectively articulated social aspirations and seeking to fulfil them. What commitments does this entail, and what kind of post-capitalist social reality is our work contributing to?

²² Ibid p.30

²³ G.N. Filonov “Anton Makarenko”, *Prospects: the quarterly review of comparative education* vol. XXIV, no. 1/2 (1994): 77–91.

²⁴ L. Boltanski and E. Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, (London: Verso, 2005), 167–216.