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(RE)THINKING CRITIQUE: TRANSVERSAL AND ETHICO- AESTHETIC DIMENSIONS IN PARTAKING PRACTICES

Introduction

In today's post-Fordist working world, values such as freedom, self-determination and self-realization – traditionally associated with the field of art and an artist-subject mostly still imagined as white and heteronormative – are equally part of the vague job profiles of start-up founders, of interns and cleaning staff in art galleries or freelance Uber Eats riders. The recourse to ideas and ideals related to educational policies and the simultaneous co-opting of emancipatory movements and ways of life for neo-liberal profit maximisation became the subject of socio-politically engaged debates in the context of contemporary art in the 2000s as well, following the publication of *Le nouvel esprit du*

capitalisme (1999).¹ In their comprehensive sociological study of the crisis of capitalism, Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello showed that “the new spirit of capitalism” had fully absorbed the critique of alienation processes of capitalist production models, which had been formulated by artists and intellectuals in the wake of May 1968. It is precisely through the integration of these demanded development opportunities, whose ambivalence Chiapello and Boltanski underscore, that contemporary capitalism has decisively gained “attractiveness”: the demands for more flexibility, creativity, and self-responsibility made against the conservative, bourgeois and bureaucratic societal structures are all but exemplarily subjectified and normalised by the role model of the artist or creative producer.² Capitalism’s since then refined ability to fully access all areas of life, something also described by authors such as Isabell Lorey, Marion von Osten or Precarias a la deriva,³ makes it necessary, in our view, to examine in more detail the operating modes of contemporary practices of critique. Our contribution therefore focuses on theories and practices of partaking that traverse and queer the

¹ Boltanski, Luc; Chiapello, Ève (1999). *Le nouvel esprit du capitalisme*. Paris: Gallimard; Boltanski, Luc; Chiapello, Ève (2007). *The New Spirit of Capitalism*. London / New York: Verso.

² See Boltanski, Luc; Chiapello, Ève (2007). “Conclusion: New Management as a Response to Critiques”. *The new spirit of capitalism*, 97: “Thus, for example, the qualities that are guarantees of success in this new spirit—autonomy, spontaneity, rhizomorphic capacity, multitasking (in contrast to the narrow specialization of the old division of labour), conviviality, openness to others and novelty, availability, creativity, visionary intuition, sensitivity to differences, listening to lived experience and receptiveness to a whole range of experiences, being attracted to informality and the search for interpersonal contacts—these are taken directly from the repertoire of May 1968.”

³ Lorey, Isabell (2009). “Governmentality and Self-Precarization: On the Normalization of Cultural Producers”. In Raunig, Gerald; Ray, Gene (Eds.). *Art and Contemporary Critical Practice*. London: MayFlyBooks, 187-202; Osten von, Marion. (Eds.). (2003). *Norm der Abweichung*. Zurich: Edition Voldemeer; Precarias a la deriva. (2006). “A Very Careful Strike”. *the commoner*, 11, 33-45, Spring 2006.

capitalist apparatus within and beyond the institutionalised art field through their transversal and ethico-aesthetic dimensions and with an intent of resistance. We are particularly interested in the transformative and critical-poetic potentials of practices and methodological approaches that differentiate and materialise the ambivalences of the mentioned “attractive” promises and desires as well as their exploitation for the purpose of capitalist self-optimisation. In the project-based organisational form of our society, in which the boundaries between gainful work, (self-)education and care work are blurred, and the demands for autonomy and allocations of responsibility have become new practices of domination and governance, we find it all the more urgent to explicate the ambivalences, differences and interdependencies of alleged emancipatory development opportunities.

Boltanski and Chiapello’s analysis of society essentially follows the philosophical investigation of forms of governance and subjectification processes developed by Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze – in conjunction with social, cultural and political mobilisations such as the anti-psychiatry movement of the 1960s. From a contemporary perspective, one can say with a certain disillusionment that neo-liberal capitalism’s control regime analysed so presciently in its beginnings by Guattari and Deleuze has become an overall economic programme that can be neither utilised in a revolutionary sense nor recalled by a political opposition. In its boundless expansion, financial-capitalist neo-liberalism permeates existences and thus takes effect as an omnipresent and internalised instrument of subjectification. In his “Postscript on the Societies of Control”, Deleuze states that “man is no longer a man enclosed” in

disciplining institutions but a “man in debt”.⁴ While Deleuze examines capitalist transformation and subjectification processes in their transitory function from the society of discipline to the society of control, Maurizio Lazzarato’s diagnosis in *La Fabrique de l’homme endetté* (2011)⁵ is that the economy of debt has evolved to become neo-liberal capitalism’s dominant operating mode. The virulent, globally connected mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion in the 21st century have now also affected those who Deleuze had still regarded as “too poor for debt, but too numerous for confinement”.⁶ Through the expansion of the neo-liberal access to the life of even the most marginalised, they too have become “human capital”, subjectified and governed by the continuous, both human and more-than-human control logics and regulation mechanisms that Lazzarato describes as the economy of debt in its negative effects.⁷ The economy of debt engenders a “specific method of subjectification and control peculiar to neo-liberal societies” that he grasps as “[t]his ongoing negotiation with oneself”.⁸ According to Lazzarato, contemporary capitalism operates and manifests itself

⁴ Deleuze, Gilles. (1992). “Postscript on the Societies of Control”. *October*, 59, 3-7, Winter, 6.

⁵ Lazzarato, Maurizio. (2011). *La Fabrique de l’homme endetté: essai sur la condition néolibérale*. Paris: Éditions Amsterdam; Lazzarato, Maurizio. (2012). *The Making of the Indebted Man: An Essay on the Neoliberal Condition*. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e).

⁶ Deleuze. “Postscript on the Societies of Control”, 6.

⁷ As a neo-liberal tool, debts establish “a transversal power relation unimpeded by State boundaries, the dualisms of production (active/non-active, employed/unemployed, productive/non-productive), and the distinctions between the economy, the political, and the social. It immediately acts at the global level, affecting entire populations, calling for and contributing to the ethical construction of the indebted man.” See Lazzarato, Maurizio. (2012). “The Ascendency of Debt in Neoliberalism”. In *The Making of the Indebted Man: An Essay on the Neoliberal Condition*. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 89-160, 89.

⁸ Lazzarato, Maurizio. (2015). “The Production of Subjectivity”. In Stakemeier, Kerstin and Witzgall, Susanne (Eds.). *Fragile Identitäten*. Zurich and Berlin: diaphanes, 165-174, 167.

exemplarily in the imperative of the competitive entrepreneur of the self and thus the internalised and individualised injunction to become a self-responsible economic subject.⁹ This is by no means an emancipatory or self-empowering moment, though, but an overlapping of processes of “social subjection” and “machinic enslavement”, of “simultaneous subjectification and de-subjectification”,¹⁰ whereby all risks and costs are continuously outsourced and ultimately taken upon by the individual.¹¹ The perfecting of the individual carried to extremes in neo-liberalism, which neutralises critique and conflicts, is legitimised through alleged promises of freedom and brings forth new passions and pathologies: “Frustration, resentment, guilt and fear are the ‘passions’ of the self-relation to the neo-liberal subject, because the promises of self-realization, of freedom and autonomy clash with a reality which systematically denies them.”¹² The deterritorialisation of the individual to a *dividual*¹³ examined by Lazzarato expands the Foucauldian concept of *biopower / biopolitics* by placing the focus on the “techno-semiotic production of subjectivities”.¹⁴ Neo-liberal governmentality is thus no longer exercised on subjectivity as a unit, on an indivisible individual, but on “the human and non-human vectors of subjectification which run

⁹ See Lazzarato, *The Making of the Indebted Man*, 50-51: “[...] an injunction that concerns just as much the unemployed as the user of public services, the consumer, the most “modest” of workers, the poorest, Of the ‘migrant.’ In the debt economy, to become human capital or an entrepreneur of the self means assuming the costs as well as the risks of a flexible and financialized economy [...]”

¹⁰ Lazzarato, “The Production of Subjectivity”, 166.

¹¹ See Lazzarato, “Introduction”. *The Making of the Indebted Man*, 7-11, 9.

¹² Lazzarato, “The Production of Subjectivity”, 167.

¹³ In the English translation of Lazzarato’s original French text, the term “dividual” is used in reference to Deleuze, Gilles. (1992). “Postscript on the Societies of Control”. *October*, 59, 3-7, Winter. On the concept of the “dividuum” see, for example, Raunig, Gerald. (2015). “Dividuum face! Sexual Violence and Domination through Partition”. *Dividuum. Machinic Capitalism and Molecular Revolution*. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 25-36.

¹⁴ Lazzarato, “The Production of Subjectivity”, 169.

through it, and on the somatic, biological, chemical, genetic and neuronal components which form the body”.¹⁵ Diagnoses of the times, such as the analyses of Lazzarato, Gerald Raunig, Lorey, and Paul B. Preciado, describe a *dividual*, or *dividuum*, as the result of the emergence of new subjectification processes that is paralyzed by the coercion of self-realisation and project realisation,¹⁶ isolated and fragmented despite the “imperative of involvement”,¹⁷ virtuoso in regard to self-regulation,¹⁸ while simultaneously appearing as a new “hormonal, electro-chemical, mediatic and totally connected subject”¹⁹ in the “pharmacopornographic era”.²⁰

When fear, distrust and resentments become the dominant affects and driving forces of neo-liberal societies, this is manifested in the increase

¹⁵ Lazzarato, “The Production of Subjectivity”, 170.

¹⁶ Lazzarato, “The Production of Subjectivity”, 167.

¹⁷ Raunig, Gerald. (2015). “Every Beginning is Dividual”. *Dividuum. Machinic Capitalism and Molecular Revolution*. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 11-23, 16.

¹⁸ See, for example, Lorey, Isabell. (2008). “Virtuosos of freedom. On the implosion of political virtuosity and productive labour”, *transversal: creativity hypes*, 02/2007, <https://transversal.at/transversal/0207/lorey/en>, 10/2008.

¹⁹ Lazzarato, “The Production of Subjectivity”, 173: “As Preciado points out, the Freudian archaeology of the ‘I’ is confronted with a new hormonal, electro-chemical, mediatic and totally connected subject.”

²⁰ Preciado, B. Paul. (2013). *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era*. New

York: The Feminist Press at CUNY. Lazzarato himself refers to his reading of Preciado’s biopolitically oriented gender analysis in *Testo Junkie* (2013) to explicitly position himself against an anthropocentric model of action that the author sees perpetuated in the conception of “cognitive capitalism”. In the light of the new “plasticity of psychic and corporal subjectivity” (Lazzarato, “The Production of Subjectivity”, 170) of the examined contemporary debt economy, the premises of “cognitive capitalism” must obviously be revised as well. See also Silvia Federici’s critique of the primacy of cognitive labour or immaterial labour as conceptualised by Lazzarato that is ultimately indicative of a strong Eurocentric or Western focus on post-Fordist modes of production. See Federici, Silvia. (2015). “Precarious Labor: A Feminist Viewpoint”, In Smithers, Stuart, Kiley, Brendan et al. (The Black Box Collective) (Eds.). *Black Box. A Record of the Catastrophe. Vol. 1*, Oakland (CA): PM Press, 42-51.

in existing inequalities, in protectionist mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion, the reinforcement of security and border *dispositifs*, or in identitary movements directed against subjectivities not fully complying with the arbitrarily established norm.²¹ Against the backdrop of the increasingly evident, negative effects of global warming and the current global Covid-19 pandemic that we, and above all the highly indebted threshold and developing countries of the so-called Global South, will have to deal with for decades to come, the question arises as to how the viral, conspiratorial and toxic effects of hopelessness and pessimism can be transformed into a collective mobilisation of the “disposition to act”.²² Or to formulate it with Guattari: the ecological crisis he describes in “The ecosophic object” and grasps as “a more general crisis of the social, political and existential”,²³ demands “a type of revolution of mentalities whereby they cease investing in a certain kind of development [...]”.²⁴ How can Guattari’s “revolution of mentalities” be transferred to non-revolutionary times that appear to hardly offer broad solidary alliances on the macro and party political level? So what can we achieve with micro-political steps in the horizon of dystopian everyday experiences distributed in an extremely disparate way, after establishing our own vulnerability and acknowledging new fragilities? By which strategies and tactics do we confront the multiplied aggressiveness of contemporary capitalist modes of (self-)government? How do we reach an activating opening of possibilities of action, when the anthropocentric subject

²¹ See Lazzarato, Maurizio. (2008). “From Knowledge to Belief, from Critique to the Production of Subjectivity”. *transversal: the art of critique*, 2008/08, <https://transversal.at/transversal/0808/lazzarato/en>, 04/2008.

²² Lazzarato, “From Knowledge to Belief”, <https://transversal.at/transversal/0808/lazzarato/en>.

²³ Guattari, Félix. (1995). “The Ecosophic Object”. *Chaosmosis. An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 119-135, 119.

²⁴ Guattari, “The Ecosophic Object”, 119.

models perpetuated by Western humanism can no longer be regarded as the starting point of our actions? What is required in the context of increasing social, economic and ecological inequalities is the “mobilisation of minds, sensibilities and wills”,²⁵ in order to find and practice forms of resistant and solidary critique that counter the current dynamics of social isolation, problematise the violent inclusion and exclusion mechanisms of a globalised economy and disrupt the exploitative extractivisms of resources that stand in a colonial tradition.

The legal political appropriations and instrumentalisations of the present situation should motivate us to reflect upon modes of action, infrastructures, techniques, and strategies of solidary alliance with respect to their affective, mediatic and social effects and transformational potentials. The analysis and change in perspective of critique as a practice of partaking and ethical stance provide options to overcome traditional criteria of a negative / affirmative, or judging and dividing, critique and instead focus more strongly on its transversal, relational and partial dimensions. Our proposition is that this leads to an understanding of critique that is no longer primarily committed to an analysing-judging diagnosis. With the concept of “partaking critique”, we therefore embark on an approximate and open search for practices of critique that focus on and encourage the opening of possibilities for action. A “partaking critique” seeks not to ignore its own situatedness, privileges and normative posits, but to make them productive in a more-than-human “becoming-with”²⁶ and to negotiate in an infrastructural,

²⁵ Guattari, “The Ecosophic Object”, 119.

²⁶ See Haraway, Donna J. (2016). *Staying with the Trouble. Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham / London: Duke University Press.

relational and material “with”. This is to be undertaken with the speculative desire to rattle and thwart firmly established mentalities in the field of critique and not to reproduce the division between hopeless pessimism and self-entrepreneurial optimism, but to transform it in a responsible way.

As authors of this text, which was written in the context of the research group “Media and Participation”,²⁷ we are faced with the pressing question of what we hope for in the described panorama when we engage with current ethico-aesthetic practices in the art field and beyond and what we ultimately seek to achieve with the conceptualisation of a “partaking critique”. As Marcelo Expósito aptly noted: “In the cultural and the art field, labour now perfectly matches the ‘communicative’ labour paradigm that is at the centre of the post-Fordist mode of production, [...]”²⁸ In this respect, we ourselves perpetuate the hegemonic model of a division of labour which is permeated by symbolic, economic and institutional power relations. In his text “Inside and Outside the Art Institution: Self-Valorization and Montage in Contemporary Art”, Expósito describes the indistinct role model of the “artist-manager” and adds to the post-Fordist worker as entrepreneur of the self, as formulated by Lazzarato, “the ideas of the artist-entrepreneur, curator-artist and artist-‘businessman’”.²⁹ These combinations of terms can be easily expanded by replacing artist with knowledge producer,

²⁷ Prof. Dr. Elke Bippus and M.A. Ruth Lang are member of the transdisciplinary research group “Media and Participation. Between Demand and Entitlement” seated at the University of Konstanz. The authors wrote this article in the frame of the subproject “Participatory Critique as Transforming and Transversal With” (01/11/2018–31/05/2021, 100019E_180412) at the Zurich University of the Arts, which is funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF).

²⁸ Expósito, Marcelo (2009). “Inside and Outside the Art Institution: Self-Valorization and Montage in Contemporary Art”. In Raunig, Gerald and Ray, Gene (Eds.). *Art and Contemporary Critical Practice*. London: MayFlyBooks, 141-153, 143.

²⁹ Expósito, “Inside and Outside the Art Institution”, 143-144.

academic, theorist and so forth. In our view, Expósito rightly describes the flexibility and flexibilisation of artistic and cultural labour as “profoundly ambivalent”.³⁰ The author, who is also a visual artist, member of parliament, activist, editor, lecturer, among other things, adds: “But the process is irreversible: we have no choice but to work within this contemporary condition”³¹ and “to self-valorize artistic labour”.³² However, Expósito’s critical stance should not be mistaken for an anti-institutionalist gesture. Instead, he is concerned with a process of instituting, as it has also been addressed by Raunig and Nowotny.³³ We read this stance as a partaking-instituting practice of critique, which appears here as labour within and at the edges of art institutions, as a restless movement of entering and exiting, of intervening and eluding. The practice of Expósito himself, as well as those of the avant-garde and contemporary artistic-political initiatives he gives as examples, are always inclined to articulate conflictual qualities and strain the traditional concept of the artwork. With our focus on these kinds of practices, which will appear more prominently in the second part of the text, we are also concerned with methods that we do not predominantly grasp as “a ‘negation’ of a traditional model”.³⁴ As academic writers / lecturers, we thus venture onto a complex and never innocent terrain

³⁰ Expósito, “Inside and Outside the Art Institution”, 144.

³¹ Expósito, “Inside and Outside the Art Institution”, 144.

³² Based on his own artistic-political practice, Expósito proposes getting rid of the dichotomous distinction between artistic and ‘non-artistic’ work. He explicitly advocates situating the valorization of “artistic labour under different forms, in different places and times, through other processes” that seek to actively subvert binary models of thought and institutionalised logics of representation. Expósito, *Inside and Outside the Art Institution*, 143-144.

³³ See the joint publication published in German: Raunig, Gerald; Nowotny, Stefan. (2016). *Instituierende Praxen. Bruchlinien der Institutionskritik*. Vienna, Linz: transversal texts.

³⁴ Expósito, “Inside and Outside the Art Institution”, 143.

that obliges us to repeatedly call into question criteria of legitimation and valorization, including our own, without writing and perpetuating a belittling or romanticising history of critical-poetic practices and artistic-political production(s).³⁵ What is decisive in Expósito's view – and toward which our conception of a “partaking critique” is oriented – is whether and how work pursued with artistic means “contributes to mobilising individual and collective energies, which it can do in many diverse ways and on a bigger or smaller scale”.³⁶ With the concept of “partaking critique”, we seek to sharpen the view, from a decidedly contemporary perspective, of the processes of change regarding subjectivities, sensibilities, mentalities, and potentialities under neo-liberal conditions. For us, this refining and interrogative update of the concept of critique is connected with a shift of the customary logics of critique, for example, with the departure from the supposedly critical and distancing analytical gaze. We thus aim at practices of a radically local and particular critique that connects itself with conceptions such as involvement and care and is obliged to reflect upon global entanglements as well.

(Re)thinking critique as a partaking practice

With an updated perspective focusing on micro-practices, critique is to be mobilised beyond universalising abstractions and totalizing gestures in its transformative potentiality to negotiate positions *with* and *in* the present. In the horizon of this (re)thinking, critique always takes place in a situated and transversal way, which we will further elaborate in the following sections. Processes of enabling / preventing partaking and the

³⁵ See Expósito, “Inside and Outside the Art Institution”, 146.

³⁶ Expósito, “Inside and Outside the Art Institution”, 151.

consideration of relational aspects thus become constitutive of critique. By favouring concepts of partaking over concepts of participation, we bring to the fore and problematise processes of sharing, of collectivising, of difference, as well as questions of responsibility and involvement. This new conceptual perspective on processes of partaking confronts critique with the dilemma that an institution – from which one possibly seeks to demarcate oneself in a fundamental opposition – is also fragmented as a representative unity, and a distinctly tangible “vis-à-vis” is therefore lacking. For this reason, a “partaking critique” as we envision it implicitly leads to distortions and shifts of the repeatedly presented notion of a genuinely critical art operating as an alternative or autonomous counter-movement. In the field of contemporary art, then, such a “partaking critique” does not aim at a fundamental negation of institutional critique, but at an, in our view, necessary updated reformulation. A “partaking critique” – following Raunig, Expósito and others – does not speak of an assumed outside, from which it would be possible to “think against” the institution of art. Critique as a partaking practice always articulates itself in and through relational structures of partaking, i.e. “with processes of partaking in the form of (micro)practices³⁷ that, to use a formulation of Deleuze and Guattari, are “molecular” and “supple”, but nonetheless

³⁷ On micropractices see: Bippus, Elke. (2015). “Adrian Pipers *Funk Lessons* – eine Mikropraxis transformierender Affirmation”. In Everts, E. Lotte, Lang, J., Lüthy, M. and Schieder, B. (Eds.). *Kunst und Wirklichkeit heute*. Affirmation – Kritik – Transformation. Bielefeld: transcript, 201-221; Bippus, Elke. (2015). “Micropolitics and Power. Conversation with Mathilde ter Heijne”. In M. ter Heijne. *Performing Changes*, Museum für Neue Kunst – Städtisches Museum Freiburg. Berlin: Sternberg Press, 193-200; Dieterich, Sebastian; Furrer Wiktorina. (2017): “Micropracticing the local: Localising micropractice”. In Greenfield, L., Trustram, M.; Abrantes, E. (Eds.) *Artistic Research. Being There. Explorations into the local*, Copenhagen: NSU Press, 75-88.

interwoven with molar and rigid segmentarities and multiplicities.³⁸ As already mentioned, Raunig reformulates institutional critique as a critical stance and “instituent practice”.³⁹ With Michel Foucault’s concept of governmentalisation, he abandons a “fundamental negation” and favours a manoeuvre to avoid what he describes as “a constant struggle in the plane of immanence”.⁴⁰ We intend to take up these threads for our conceptualization of critique as a partaking practice and raise the question as to what makes such an avoidance manoeuvre critical. Based on this question, we propose to expand critique as a partaking practice in a (queer)feminist and differentiating way through the concepts of “reparative reading”⁴¹ and “becoming-with”.⁴²

“Reparative reading” as a practice of “partaking critique”

In her text “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You’re So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You”⁴³ from 2003, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick analyses contemporary critical thought in its

³⁸ In the chapter “Micropolitics and Segmentarity,” Guattari and Deleuze deconstruct the binary reading of the concept of segmentarity constructed by ethnologists “to account for so-called primitive societies, which have no fixed, central State apparatus and no global power mechanisms or specialized political institutions.” (Deleuze, Gilles; Guattari, Félix. (1987). *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 209) They establish that there is no dichotomy between central and segmented, and instead distinguish between rigid and supple segmentarity, between aborified and rhizomatic segmentarity (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 212).

³⁹ Raunig, Gerald. (2006). “Instituent Practices. Fleeing, Instituting”, *Transforming. transversal: do you remember institutional critique? 01/2006*, <https://transversal.at/transversal/0106/raunig/en>, 01/2006.

⁴⁰ Raunig, “Instituent Practices”, <https://transversal.at/transversal/0106/raunig/en>.

⁴¹ Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. (2003). “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You’re So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You”. In *ibid.*, *Touching Feeling. Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Chapter 4, 123-151). Durham: Duke University Press.

⁴² Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*.

⁴³ Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading”.

proximity to the academic, interpreting practice of the “concept of paranoia.”⁴⁴ The once productive and critical method described by Paul Ricœur in 1965 as *hermeneutics of suspicion* has become the synonym of critique⁴⁵ per se, according to Sedgwick, and acquired a paralysing side effect. Sedgwick reflects on these effects in connection with and against the backdrop of the homophobic and racist AIDS policy of pharmaceutical corporations in the context of welfare and health policies in the United States in the 1970s. The doubtless important exposure of comprehensive and truly systematic oppressions and the awareness of them simultaneously have limiting epistemological consequences that prevent taking local and contingent relations into account.⁴⁶ Sedgwick responds to these performative effects of knowledge, which she problematises in the context of the negotiated *hermeneutics of suspicion*, with the concept of “reparative reading”. In her view, the *hermeneutics of suspicion* privileges the concept of paranoia: in its “anticipatory” orientation, paranoid critique secures itself against, and even prevents, any kind of surprise.⁴⁷ Since paranoid critique relies on “exposure”, it places, “in practice, an extraordinary stress on the efficacy of knowledge

⁴⁴ Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading”, 125. The text harks back to publications in 1996 and 1997. The concept of “reparative reading” originated in a four-page introduction to the issue “Queerer than Fiction” of the periodical *Studies in the Novel*.

⁴⁵ See Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading”, 124.

⁴⁶ See Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading”, 124.

⁴⁷ As a “strong theory,” it claims to be overarching, wide-ranging and especially teachable. But precisely this makes it reductionist and allows it to derive a plethora of phenomena from just a few basic assumptions. As a theory of “negative affects,” paranoid critique has “the effect of entirely blocking the potentially operative goal of seeking positive affect.” (Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading”, 136).

per se”.⁴⁸ This ultimately reproduces a hierarchical division between those who know and those who don’t know. Sedgwick juxtaposes the paranoid practice of reading based on a “strong theory”, which she mainly interprets as analytically exposing, with the model of “reparative reading”, which operates aesthetically, is driven by curiosity, seeks moments of surprising insights, aims at amelioration and includes pleasure.⁴⁹ This “reparative reading” exercises an epistemological practice that focuses on the subject of research through “close reading”, for example, and develops decidedly local theories and starts from ad hoc taxonomies.⁵⁰ Sedgwick describes the positions of the ego to its objects in the process of reparative readings as “changing and heterogeneous relational stances”.⁵¹ With this relationship between ego and object, she associates practices that are “divided between the paranoid and the reparative”.⁵² The reparative – and this is something we would like to emphasise – does not imply healing or restitution, but rather a practice of reading that activates changes. Vacillating between contrary reading models, such as “paranoid” and “reparative readings” and their

⁴⁸ Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading”, 138. In this context, Sedgwick problematises the prime motive of exposure in a society in which visibility itself constitutes much of the violence.

⁴⁹ From a paranoid perspective, reparative reading is therefore denigrated as merely aesthetic and reformist. See Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading”, 144.

⁵⁰ Sedgwick formulated her critique of a paranoid reading practice in a time when queer theory experienced its first institutional formation. According to Robyn Wiegman, Sedgwick is concerned not with a replacement or negation of the paranoid practice, but with its reformulation, also in a debate with Judith Butler, the second pivotal figure in establishing queer theory at the time. Wiegman says that Sedgwick regards Butler’s text *Gender Trouble* as “an exemplary paranoid text” that “teaches us that ‘you can never be paranoid enough’”. Wiegman, Robyn. (2014). The times we’re in: Queer feminist criticism and the reparative ‘turn’. *Feminist Theory* 15, 1, 4-25, 10. With her text, Sedgwick refers not to the opposition or alternative of this approach, but to the “coexistence of paranoid and reparative critical practices as part of the queer theoretical project from the outset [...]”. Wiegman, The times we’re in, 12.

⁵¹ Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading”, 128.

⁵² Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading”, 150.

criticality, must be clearly distinguished from indecisiveness or indifference and also from a purely strategic avoidance manoeuvre. The practice of “reparative reading” is shaped in the relation to local requirements and includes them in a critical way; it aims at flexibility and thus at a reading that does not resolve contradictions, but names them, and thus opens up the possibility of critical partaking. One can learn from Sedgwick that to-and-fro movements – or, to expand it with Expósito, of entering and exiting institutions – can point out contradictions which those critiquing must necessarily deal with anew each time. In the context of the AIDS crisis of the 1980s, Sedgwick developed a method of analysis going beyond the field of literary studies, with which she invoked a critical practice allowing one to get involved and engage in the respective situation, so that, for example, the endangered life of those infected with HIV does not disappear behind the demand for a “strong theory”. With the juxtaposition of “paranoid” and “reparative reading”, she points to the dead end in which an ordering, classifying, judging or even condemning critique mostly oriented toward binary patterns has gotten stuck. She thus advocates the use of different critical reading models that do not exclude each other but coexist. Sedgwick departs from a critique that follows an either/or model and supplements it with an “and/and” as well as an “and/or” proposition.⁵³

Critique in the horizon of a “becoming-with”

⁵³ See Krasny, Elke (2020). *Archive, Care, and Conversation: Suzanne Lacy's International Dinner Party in Feminist Curatorial Thought*. Zurich: ONCURATING.org. [https://www.oncurating.org/files/oc/dateverwaltung/books/Elke%20Krasny/PHD Elke KrasnyNEW.pdf](https://www.oncurating.org/files/oc/dateverwaltung/books/Elke%20Krasny/PHD%20Elke%20KrasnyNEW.pdf), 179.

Based on Sedgwick's problematisation of the traditional critical practice of a *hermeneutics of suspicion*, we would now like to conceive "partaking critique" following Donna Haraway as situated and partial. Our intention with this reference is not to base critique on an agreement with universal demands, not to judge in compliance with established norms and not to reduce critique to the practical exercise of reason. Haraway speaks of "situated knowledges" and points out the fundamental conditionality and perspectivity of scientific knowledge as well as an uncircumventable involvement.⁵⁴ By also making use of Haraway's criterion of partiality for a "partaking critique", we demand and imagine that such a critical practice does not assume a neutral standpoint, does not legitimise itself through the construction of objectivity, but instead takes sides and thus becomes partial and partisan.⁵⁵ Haraway's understanding of partiality, which becomes explicit in her subsequent writings, is that of a "becoming-with"⁵⁶ that responds to the requirements of a world always read as relational. A "partaking critique" is carried out in processes of "becoming-with" via the untangling and entangling of lumped and dense events – and simultaneously as a speculative reading of traces. The perspective she proposes reformulates critique as a practice that not

⁵⁴ In her critique of science formulated in *Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective*, Haraway decidedly calls into question the concepts of objectivity and universality. Haraway Donna J. (1988). "Situated Knowledges. The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective". *Feminist Studies*, 14. 3, 575-599. On Haraway see Deuber-Mankowsky, Astrid and Holzhey, Christoph F. E. (Eds.). (2013). *Situiertes Wissen und Regionale Epistemologie. Zur Aktualität Georges Canguilhem's und Donna J. Haraway's*. Vienna, Berlin: Turia + Kant.

⁵⁵ Karin Harrasser describes Haraway's "cognitive stance" as a "distancing from the 'divine perspective' of occidental science that abstracts, objectifies and universalizes." In contrast, Haraway "advocates multi-perspectivity, interestedness, positioning, even partisanship." Harrasser, Karin. (2013). "Treue zum Problem. Situiertes Wissen als Kosmopolitik". In Deuber-Mankowsky, Astrid and Holzhey, Christoph F. E. (Eds.). *Situiertes Wissen und Regionale Epistemologie*, 241-259, 242.

⁵⁶ See Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 16ff. Haraway explains "becoming-with" in relation to her interlocutors and in the context of collective knowledge.

only reflects partiality but actively pursues it,⁵⁷ making it tangible and thus vulnerable. This implies that the analysis of historical contingency and the conditions of the origin of knowledge – and of critique, we add – are connected to critical knowledge and scientific practices that insist on the “irreducible difference and radical multiplicity of local knowledges”.⁵⁸ A “partaking critique” understood as situated and partial must be grasped as fundamentally relational; it reflects the historical development of its claim as well as the conditionality of the criticising subject. In its partiality, it opens up and connects with aspects of sensuality, materiality or the political, for instance. A “partaking critique” privileged through its situatedness and partiality in the sense of Haraway is connected to a form of responsibility that cannot be reduced to responding or being responsible *for* others. Rather, it is about a form of action of response-ability.⁵⁹ Critique is conceived in relationality and dependency in such ways that make it necessary, in our view, to exercise reparative practices of responding that do not amount to paranoid anticipations, but instead seek and enable modalities of “becoming-with”. In contrast to the model of “becoming”, this “becoming-with” is conceived in a fundamental relationality and sociality. Intra- and interactions constitute “who is/are to be in/of the world”⁶⁰ through and

⁵⁷ According to Katharina Thiele, this performative approach distinguishes Haraway’s concept of critique “as a creative as well as co-and-further-thinking constellation of arguments.” Thiele, Kathrin. (2015). “Ende der Kritik? Kritisches Denken heute”. In Allerkamp, A.; Orozco, P. V. and Witt, S. (Eds.). *Gegen/Stand der Kritik* Zurich: diaphanes, 139-162, 141.

⁵⁸ Haraway, “Situated Knowledges”, 579.

⁵⁹ Assuming responsibility includes the “obligation to enable a response by others.” Note of the translator Karin Harrasser in the German edition: Haraway, Donna J. (2018). *Unruhig bleiben. Die Verwandtschaft der Arten im Chthuluzän* (Translated by Karin Harrasser) Frankfurt a.M.: Campus Verlag.

⁶⁰ Haraway, “Staying with the Trouble”, 12.

in processes of response-ability: the non-intentional actions of passing on and giving back, of passing forward and passing back, could lead to one holding something “unasked-for”⁶¹ in one’s hands. When critique is now also considered as the result of human and non-human relations and in its fundamental sociality, it becomes qua practice part of the subject and object forming entanglements that constitute “who is/are to be in/of the world”⁶² and are thus connected with an ethico-political dimension. Haraway gained the “becoming-with” based on the concept of “sympoiesis in ecological evolutionary developmental biology”.⁶³ With “self-poietics” as a responsive and relational figure, Butler and Athanasiou develop a comparable concept.⁶⁴ The two concepts challenge the construction of “both property and sovereignty”.⁶⁵ They respond to this construction with the recognition of mutual social dependency, the conditionality of economic, social and ethnic circumstances, and by taking passions into account that cannot always be ascribed to conscious processes. The assumption of a fundamental sociality emphasises relations and relatedness and thus that which is commonly shared, which is conveyed in material aesthetics and in the distributions of the sensible.⁶⁶ Against this background, it becomes the basis of the political. When the self in its sociality and ability to be affected does not stand for an autonomous, sovereign entity, but for a “contingent rupture”, for “a

⁶¹ Haraway, “Staying with the Trouble”, 12.

⁶² Haraway, “Staying with the Trouble”, 13.

⁶³ Haraway, “Staying with the Trouble”, 5.

⁶⁴ Butler, Judith; Athanasiou, Athena. (2013). *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political*. Cambridge: Polity, 66. Athanasiou characterises “self-poietics” accordingly: “Self-poietics does not concern just the ‘self’ - in the way of heroic self-sufficient individualism or an alternative liberal ‘anything goes’ - but emerges as a performative occasion in an ongoing process of socially regulatory self-formation [...]” Butler and Athanasiou, *Dispossession*, 68.

⁶⁵ Butler and Athanasiou, *Dispossession*, ix.

⁶⁶ See Rancière, Jacques. (2004). *The Politics of Aesthetics. The Distribution of the Sensible*. New York: continuum.

possibility opened”,⁶⁷ values of responsiveness and responsibility can take the place of the conception of the sovereign position of the (self-) aware self. Lorey has shown that dependency, endangerment and vulnerability do not imply a new essentialisation of the subject or a new ontology.⁶⁸ It is not about taking the fear of endangerment or vulnerability as “the starting point of the analysis of power relations” but the “lacking recognition of fundamentally endangered life”.⁶⁹

In the horizon of a “becoming-with,” “partaking critique” means, after what has been said, that critique cannot be conceived based on a critiquing, sovereign subject, quite the contrary. The critiquing subject is a generated and generating part of a relational world.⁷⁰ Such a relational structure of the world is determined by more-than-human and human intentional processes, i.e. through practices, depictions, materials, infrastructures, discourses, *dispositifs*, relational entanglements, ecologies. In summary, it can be said that from this perspective, critique cannot be reduced to the distinguishing and judging ability of a reasoning subject capable of understanding and judging in a learned way.⁷¹ “Partaking critique” is instead affected by mediatic, material, infrastructural, or aesthetic-sensual dimensions, it responds to them and

⁶⁷ Butler and Athanasiou, *Dispossession*, 66.

⁶⁸ Lorey, Isabell. (2010). “Prekariisierung als Verunsicherung und Entsetzen. Immunisierung, Normalisierung und neue Furcht erregende Subjektivierungsweisen”. In Manske, A. and Pühl, A. (Eds.). *Prekariisierung zwischen Anomie und Normalisierung. Geschlechtertheoretische Bestimmungen*, Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 48-81.

⁶⁹ Lorey, “Prekariisierung als Verunsicherung”, 67.

⁷⁰ The concept of relationality or relational follows Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou. See Butler and Athanasiou, *Dispossession*, 2 and 66.

⁷¹ The reduction of critique to the exercise of reason is true of both philosophical and philological critique, i.e., of critique as rational cognition and critique as judgement of a given. See Bormann, Claus von; Tonelli, Giorgio; Holzhey, Helmut (1971). “Kritik. In *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*”. Online Doi: 10.24894/HWPh.5649.

affects them. Critique that partakes is at once situational and local; in the attempt to overcome the circumstances it criticises, it becomes critical work on universalising, categorising or disciplining knowledge productions.

Writing as a practice of “partaking critique”

After the perspectivisation of “partaking critique” through the method of “reparative reading” following Sedgwick, we would now like to draw on Haraway’s critical epistemology to shed light on the practice theory of the Argentinian collective of authors, *Colectivo Situaciones*, as a practice of writing in the sense of a “partaking critique”. Starting from the method of “investigación militante”, we would like to use the arguments of *Colectivo Situaciones* to discuss the question pertaining to the ways in which critique can be articulated in a relational and intersubjective structure that repeatedly manifest itself anew and in a situational manner—without getting caught in an endless loop of self-relativisation. This can succeed, to respond with Haraway, by consciously engaging with “risky comakings”⁷² that are associated with the “becoming-with”, but also accompany instituent practices.

The texts published at the beginning of the 2000s by the activist authors and editors of *Colectivo Situaciones* were discussed beyond the local field of activism pervaded by academic discourses and received as well in the European art context. The collaboratively developed writings by *Colectivo Situaciones* resonate with Haraway’s objectivity-critical approach of “situated knowledges”, especially as regards the question of involvement and its implications for critique. In the context of partaking

⁷² Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 14.

in the massive social mobilizations in Argentina in 2001 and 2002, *Situaciones* formulated a methodological approach from a local and situational perspective that can be read as an attempt at a situational renegotiation of critique: the militant departure from the persisting claim to existence of a rational and universal subject adhering to the objectifying and representing view of its subject-matter also sets traditional affiliations and disciplinary localizations in motion. The collective describes its method as “investigación militante”,⁷³ as both the investigation of militancy and militant investigation. Through the social and discursive practices of co-authorship and co-editorship, this type of militant investigation utilises, the way we see it, radical forms of involvement and strategies of “with”. Out of their own involved activities and as a direct response to the political, economic and social situation that was called the Argentinian crisis, *Situaciones* started developing and putting into practice their own methodological and ethical stance.

Informed by the experiences of the protests that began in December 2001, the authors addressed and problematised the practice of writing *about* as a potentially violent act of epistemologically appropriation of activist practice knowledge:

In this way, criticism remains blind at least with respect to two essential moments: on one side with respect to the (external) *subject* that exercises it. Researchers are not required to investigate themselves. They can construct consistent knowledges *on* the situation as long as, and

⁷³ Colectivo Situaciones. (2002). “Prologo: Sobre el método”. In Colectivo Situaciones and MTD de Solano (Eds.). *La Hipótesis 891: Más allá de los piquetes*. Buenos Aires: De mano en mano, 9-22, 10.

precisely *thanks to*, their being *outside*, at a prudent distance which supposedly guarantees a certain *objectivity*. This objectivity is authentic and efficacious to the extent that it is nothing but the other side of the *violent* objectualization of the situation they work *upon*. [...] This ethical dimension points to the very complexity of research militancy [investigación militante]: the subjective work of deconstructing any inclination toward objectualization. In other words: *doing research without an object*.⁷⁴

The texts published by *Situaciones* and written in a dialog with actors including the human rights organisation *H.I.J.O.S.*⁷⁵ made it possible to circulate the “saberes situacionales”,⁷⁶ the situationally generated

⁷⁴ Colectivo Situaciones. (2003). “On the Researcher-Militant, *transversal: militant research*”, 04/2006, <https://transversal.at/transversal/0406/colectivo-situaciones/de>, 09/2003. See also the excerpts translated into German in the frame of the exhibition and research project *Ex Argentina: Colectivo Situaciones*. (2004). “Über die Methode”. In Creischer, Alice; Siekmann, Andreas and Massuh, Gabriela (Eds.). *Ex Argentina: Schritte zur Flucht von der Arbeit zum Tun / Pasos para huir del trabajo al hacer*, Cologne: Walther König, 71-73.

The original Argentinian, manifesto-like text was the introduction to a publication that *Colectivo Situaciones* wrote and edited together with the self-organised group *MTD* (Movimiento Trabajadores Desocupados / Movement of Unemployed Workers) of the Buenos Aires suburb of Solano. The book resulted from the dialog between *Situaciones* and *MTD Solano*, whose actors participated in the street barricades, the so-called “piquetes”, to block the access roads to Buenos Aires in the wake of the uprisings in 2001 and 2002, and is based on a series of meetings, workshops and talks. See Colectivo Situaciones and MTD de Solano. (2002). *La Hipótesis 891: Más allá de los piquetes*. Buenos Aires: De mano en mano.

⁷⁵ The acronym *H.I.J.O.S.* stands for “Hijos por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio” (Descendants for Identity and Justice Against Forgetting and Silence). The human rights organization was founded in 1995 in response to the state policy of impunity during the presidency of Carlos Menem, i.e. the institutional continuation of granting amnesty to (co-)perpetrators of Argentina’s last civilian-military dictatorship (1976–1983).

⁷⁶ See the writings on the action form of “*escrache*” published by *Colectivo Situaciones* with *H.I.J.O.S.* and the organisation *Mesa de escrache popular*. See Colectivo Situaciones and Mesa de escrache popular. (2002). *Genocida en el barrio*. Buenos Aires: De mano en mano; Colectivo Situaciones. (2004). *Escrache. Aktionen nichtstaatlicher Gerechtigkeit in Argentinien*. Berlin: b_books.

knowledge of the activist practices, with and in the engagement with the social movements. With Haraway, these constellations of actors and authors can be regarded as “risky comaking”.⁷⁷ For the field of militant activism, in which the movement collective *Situaciones* situated itself, this means that the articulation of a “partaking critique” via “comakings” of dialogical writing takes the risk of exposing vulnerability in the process of involvement and thus also engenders new potentials of attack. Against this background, the shared knowledge work of *Situaciones* cannot be mistaken for a bipartisan, harmonising or harmless form of partaking: the discursive and intervening accompaniment of social movements and their forms of protest that *Situaciones* pursued – for example, by initiating discussion formats and publishing texts – was connected by the collective to the ethical ambition of a (self-)reflexive, actively intervening practice of writing and publishing realised in a continuous and direct debate with the involved social actors. In appropriative reference to the impetus of operaistic “con-ricerca” described by Antonio Negri and others, an emancipatory investigation method of inquiry in the context of the northern Italian workers’ milieu of the 1960s,⁷⁸ this thinking in writing was to always examine one’s own position as well. This expresses an examining and searching desire for involving and involvedness that *Situaciones* compared with the transforming and never innocent experience of falling in love. According to *Situaciones*, the author-subject possessing authority who can objectively describe and represent their object of study is replaced by the

⁷⁷ Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 14.

⁷⁸ See Negri, Antonio. (2003). “Logic and Theory of Inquiry. Militant praxis as subject and as episteme”, *transversal: militant research*, 04/2006, <https://transversal.at/transversal/0406/negri/en>, 04/2003.

figure of the “*militante de investigación*” who is always in a precarious existential balance and in whose case militancy, investigation, method, subject of study, and object of study mutually depend on each other in situational and relational terms when they are engendered.⁷⁹ The inevitable consequence is that the vulnerability emerging and becoming visible in this process of “becoming-with” must also be renegotiated. It is therefore a radically local “becoming-with” that generates risks which cannot be born on an individual level. As already mentioned, in the contemporary historical horizon of the anti-globalisation movement, the critically partaking practice theory of *Situaciones* was also received in the European context of contemporary art. The massive social mobilisations that began in December 2001 and the attendant emergence of new social and cultural practices such as those of *Situaciones* led to Argentina being internationally perceived in a paradoxical way as a peripheral, “vibrant” and exemplary laboratory of the crisis, so to speak. This wave of interest in poetic-activist practices from Argentina, as materialised, for example, in the transatlantic exhibition and research project *Ex Argentina* (2003–2006), allows for a preliminary proposition: the increasing circulation of so-called political art from the Global South in the Western, globalised exhibition context at the beginning of the 2000s speaks of an ambivalent desire for new forms of critique.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ See, for example, Colectivo Situaciones, *La Hipótesis 891: Más allá de los piquetes*, 10f.

⁸⁰ This hypothesis is from the unpublished dissertation of Ruth Lang with the working title “Articulations of critique of poetic-activist practices along the international exhibition and research project *Ex Argentina* (2003–2006)”. Detailed information on the project *Ex Argentina*, which was realised in cooperation with the Goethe Institut Buenos Aires, can be found in the two exhibition catalogues: Creischer, Alice; Siekmann, Andreas; and Massuh, Gabriela. (Eds.). (2004). *Ex Argentina: Schritte zur Flucht von der Arbeit zum Tun / Pasos para huir del trabajo al hacer*, Cologne: Walther König; Massuh, Gabriela. (Eds.). (2006). *Ex Argentina: L(a)Normalidad*, Interzona: Buenos Aires.

Militant involvements as “partaking critique”

The concept of a “partaking critique” developed and put up for debate in this text based on methodological approaches and artistic-activist practices, which we could only deal with in a fragmentary way here, leads to shifts in the notion of a genuinely critical art as an alternative or autonomous counter-movement. In the field of contemporary art, “partaking critique” therefore does not aim at a fundamental negation of institutional critique, but at an updating reformulation. A “partaking critique” does not speak from the position of an assumed, imagined outside, from which a “thinking against” the institution of art would be possible. It is articulated in relational structures of partaking “with” it and via “risky comakings”. For critique, as pointedly formulated by Alice Creischer and Andreas Siekmann, is always partaking: “To puke on the carpet on which one stands.”⁸¹ With this statement, Creischer and Siekmann expressed the challenges they faced in their multifunctional role as artists-curators-initiators of the transatlantic exhibition and research project *Ex Argentina* (2003–2006).⁸² This vivid statement also addresses the ambivalence of their localization and situatedness as

⁸¹ Creischer, Alice and Siekmann, Andreas. (2008). “Auf den Teppich kotzen, auf dem man steht. Kann künstlerische Arbeit eine Militante Untersuchung sein?”, *arranca! Für eine linke Strömung*, Militante Untersuchung, 39, Winter 2008/2009, <https://arranca.org/archive?path=%2Fprint%2F55>.

⁸² The international exhibition and research project *Ex Argentina* (2003–2006) was realised with organizational support by the Goethe Institut Buenos Aires and funding by the German Federal Cultural Foundation. At the end of 2002, Creischer / Siekmann travelled to Buenos Aires with the idea of realizing “an economy-critical investigation of the economic crisis” in Argentina. (Creischer and Siekmann, Auf den Teppich kotzen, auf dem man steht, <https://arranca.org/archive?path=%2Fprint%2F55>.) The thematic focus of *Ex Argentina* was the intent to investigate the background and context of the economic, political and social crisis in Argentina after the uprisings in 2001/2002 with artistic and curatorial methods and procedures, and in doing so to draw a critical comparison with the neo-liberal mechanisms in Germany.

European actors in the institutionalised and increasingly globalised field of contemporary art. The example of the cooperation project *Ex Argentina* makes it evident that ethico-political, (post-)institution critical and participatory ambitions are inevitably sources of friction and lead to charged relationships between those involved, not least because symbolic and conflictual valorizations become virulent in the exhibition context. The term “investigación militante” coined by the collective of authors *Colectivo Situaciones* had a crucial function for the positioning of Creischer und Siekmann and the development of *Ex Argentina*:

When we were in Argentina, we met Colectivo Situaciones and read their text *On Methods* [Note of the authors: Colectivo Situaciones, Prólogo. *Sobre el método*, 9-22]. The term militant investigation implies a demarcation from an objectifying cognitive procedure. Militant investigations mean a practice of gaining knowledge that takes place in a political practice and experience. But this also means that I abandon my position as an objective field-worker coming from the outside. I myself get involved. That also corresponded with the conflicts we had in our project in regard to an academic concept of art and a seminarism that always wants to be on the side of truth. John Holloway says that science itself creates its own fetishism, the fetishism of purported objectivity or of allegedly pure, indifferent cognition.⁸³

⁸³ Creischer and Siekmann, “Auf den Teppich kotzen, auf dem man steht”, <https://arranca.org/archive?path=%2Fprint%2F55>.

Creischer's and Siekmann's discursive, artistic and curatorial dealing with *Situaciones'* activist practice theory unrelated to art in-forms⁸⁴ an ethico-political, in a certain respect ideological and never consistent positioning in their own context which is traversed by hierarchising power relations. Creischer's and Siekmann's artistic-militant intent to act inside, *with* and at the fringes of Western institutions of contemporary art expresses a desire for risky forms of becoming involved and involving. As partaking critical work within a field shaped by hierarchical relations, transatlantic cooperation projects such as *Ex Argentina* generate conflictual and challenging, partaking situations for those involved, which also reflect processes of institutionalisation.

"Partaking critique" as demand

The authors of this text have grasped their involvement as an opportunity to bring together debates and conceptions that are often separated, or, formulated differently, to overcome the exclusion of (queer)feminist discourses in critical analyses of the present, as they are associated with authors such as Lazzarato, Antonio Negri, Michael Hardt, Chantal Mouffe, Jacques Rancière or Jean-Luc Nancy. This is done with the wish to let the "strong theories" and discursive power agencies of these authors become transversal in the form of a "partaking critique". We are convinced that the presented concept of "becoming-with" is linked to subjectification processes that strongly differ from the form of an "ongoing negotiation with oneself" that is characteristic of neo-liberal

⁸⁴ See Bippus, Elke. (2019). "Künstlerisch-ästhetische Prozesse des Denkens". In Alexander Fischer and Annett Wienmeister (eds.). *Grenzgänge in der Philosophie: Denken darstellen. Tagungsband mit Zeichnungen von Sebastian Lörscher*. Münster: mentis, 61-76, 68.

societies. For not the self-optimisation of the individual is valorized, but figures of sociality, dependency, conditionality, and vulnerability associated with practices of partaking and relationality. The practice of “reparative reading”, in turn, mobilises dispositions of action⁸⁵ by getting involved, even at the risk of acting and reacting situationally. With the intertwining of paranoid and reparative approaches, it additionally transverses and queers a mentality of critique in order to “cease investing in a certain kind of development.”⁸⁶ The concepts of Haraway and Sedgwick are certainly no revolution—should one even want to comply with this avant-gardist figure in the first place. But they exercise a form of critical writing and reading that in a challenging way calls for and demands (re)thinking critique as a practice of partaking in its transversal and ethico-aesthetic dimensions.

Translated by Karl Hoffmann

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⁸⁵ See Lazzarato, “From Knowledge to Belief”, <https://transversal.at/transversal/0808/lazzarato/en>.

⁸⁶ Guattari, “The Ecosophic Object”, 119.

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