



Lost Highway Expedition, discussion at [mama] Zagreb, Summer 2006

Network Creativity

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Novi Zagreb, 2006

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## EUROPE LOST AND FOUND

*Network struggle... does not rely on discipline: creativity, communication and self-organized cooperation are its primary values.<sup>1</sup>*

In the spring of 2006 the two translocal urban research networks School of Missing Studies and Centrala Foundation for Future Cities invited interested parties to participate in a spatial experiment that was intended to have the character of an expedition. Whereas expeditions are usually a means of exploring remote regions, the *Lost Highway Expedition* followed a route through the Western Balkans. The remote aspect of this collective journey was thus not conceived in terms of place but in terms of time, in the sense of bygone time of ideological community formation in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). However, the project was not concerned with a nostalgic retrieval of lost conceptions and values but with developing paths for the future on the basis of the travel experiences of a self-organized community.

The core of this aesthetic and social experiment comprised a collective journey along the 'Highway of Brotherhood and Unity', a section of highway begun in 1948 but never completed. At the time, its collective construction was seen as a means of linking the major cities of the SFRY in both an ideological and infrastructural sense. Following years of violent conflict and economic and social upheaval, the Western Balkans – the name coined for this territory after 1991 – is today associated with an area whose unifying characteristic is above all to be found in the long-term exclusion of the majority of its inhabitants from EU Europe, even though the highway that was rebuilt by private companies following the destruction wrought by the Balkan wars is now being reclaimed as a part of the pan-European Corridor X within the infrastructure of the EU.<sup>2</sup> One of the questions confronting the members of the expedition concerned the meaning inherent in such a connection between places, ideologies and memories and the meaning it might acquire. The original invitation to join the expedition put it in these terms:

'The *Lost Highway Expedition* will begin in Ljubljana, and travel through Zagreb, Novi Sad, Belgrade, Skopje, Prishtina, Tirana and Podgorica before concluding in Sarajevo: It will comprise two days of events in each city and one day of travel in between. The events may include guided tours, presentations and forums by local experts, workshops involving the travellers and local participants, discussions, exhibitions, radio shows, picnics and other events that can be organized by the host cities themselves. Members of the *Lost Highway Expedition* do not have to travel or stay together and can enter and exit the expedition for any length of time and at any point. Participants are responsible for organizing, supporting and realizing their own journeys. The expedition is meant to generate new projects, new art works, new networks, new architecture and new politics based on the experience and knowledge gained along the highway.'<sup>3</sup>



In August 2006, the shared search for an experimental community brought hundreds of participants from a wide range of backgrounds into contact with independent organizations, initiatives and cultural producers from the nine different regions spanned by the expedition. Some participants spent a month travelling the entire route, while others accompanied the expedition for only a few days. Some immediately found themselves integrated in a collective group process, while



others launched their own initiatives in dialogue with the event. In order to maintain the decentralized structure of the expedition, participants were deliberately left to define their own projects, plan their own time and make their own contacts. The concept of swarming perhaps best describes the way in which knowledge of the expedition spread, the way the vaguely delimited groups moved from section to section, converged again and subsequently disseminated the knowledge generated during their journeys in different and only partly interconnected projects – exhibitions, seminars, workshops and publications.<sup>4</sup>

On the highway from Zagreb to Belgrade, 2006

The experimental network structure via which these activities could be disseminated and which led to a range of unanticipated encounters and findings is not the only important parameter in this context. Important, too, are the intellectual concentration and range of these new knowledge formations, which are interrelated with the way the traversed localities are linked with external networks, including the geocultural assemblages and mobilities embodied by the initiators of the project themselves. The initial platform, Europe Lost and Found, consisting of Azra Akšamija, Ana Dzokic, Katherine Carl, Ivan Kucina, Marc Neelen, Kyong Park, Marjetica Potrc and Srdjan Jovanovic Weiss, constitutes a plurality of translocal relationships and interrelated cultural references that extends far beyond the effective capacity of concrete group dynamics. The current exchange involving Ana Dzokic and Marc Neelen between Belgrade, the capital of turbo-culture, and the architectural stronghold of Rotterdam; the link forged by Azra Akšamija between post-war Sarajevo and academic institutions in the US; the different, marginalized places that Kyong Park's work in Asia, North America and Europe brings together; the connection made by Marjetica Potrc between forms of self-organization in the Western Balkans and Latin America; Srdjan Jovanovic Weiss's nomadic architectural enterprises between Novi Sad and Philadelphia – all these links are creating a mobile network structure with which a plurality of local features can be projected as a translocal opportunity.

What enabled the socio-aesthetic experiment *Lost Highway Expedition* to become more than a self-referential group experience was the space of action that was generated by the collaboration of the project's initiators and that absorbed new actors and formulated an expanded political space. The power of this space reflects the degree to which subjectivity can express itself in a diffuse and fragmented form and lead to efficient aesthetic and political connections via a reorganization of this diffusion. In this sense, the potential of the situation generated by this expeditional experiment can be read more as a merging of aesthetic productions and geocultural realities in a concrete form of spatial praxis than as an encounter between like-minded individuals. In connection with her project *Timescapes* on the experiential topography of Corridor X, which formed one of the most heavily used guest-worker routes from south-eastern Europe during the 1970s and 1980s, Angela Melitopoulos sees a potential in the inter-operation of different spatial logics:

'The logical basis of the B-Zone is its tie to the A-Zone, but the fragmentation of the B-Zone can follow other logics that could alter both zones substantially.'<sup>5</sup> The question of which communities are generated by infrastructures and networks is dependent on their utilization. The concrete embodiment of migratory interconnections, the traversable reality of the Western Balkans and the contacts provided by the initiators to local initiatives together with access to political discussions, specialized city tours and social activities served to anchor the expedition in spatial reality and prevented the search for a new 'temporary society' from being oriented solely to the process of the group or a diffuse concept of globality. This anchorage in the provisional formations of a concrete geocultural reality meant that a level was available beyond that of micro and macro-organization which



[mama] Centre for new media, Zagreb, 2006

14 allowed the possibilities offered by one relational structure to be used to gain a new understanding of other structures. The relationships between these many

anchor points and the actualization of their potential in the collectively undertaken journey fashion, as it were, the connection sought by the expedition between the loci of the Western Balkans and other geopolitical regions.

In this sense, network creativity not only implies that networks are generated in a creative way but also emphasizes that networks cultivate a morphological structure for creativity. The artistic projects produced during and in the wake of the expedition form archives of knowledge that in turn allow for an extension of the expedition beyond those involved in situ to include a growing number of dispersed participants. The productive power of the network thus consists in its morphological openness, which makes it possible constantly to forge new connections from each of its nodes without necessarily being linked to a legitimizing and controlling origin.



Members of the expanding Roma community in Novi Sad, Serbia, many of whom have been expelled from Germany where they initially sought refuge after being forced out of Kosovo in 1989

## SITES OF ACTION

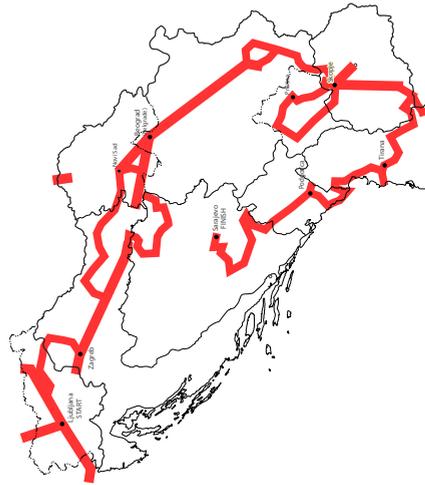
Whether in the form of transnational political initiatives, global economies, new technologies or urban social movements, networks are the distinctive characteristic of spatial organization in the twenty-first century. Networks have changed our forms of cultural coexistence and communication just as they have the way in which we produce and experience spaces. Cities, regions, countries and continents are being experienced less and less as fixed territories and increasingly as fluid and contested landscapes, formed and mobilized by networks of integrating realities. Networks are a form of organization, an operational politics and a generative process.

On all these levels they foreground the relationships between objects rather than the objects themselves. Network thinking revolves around connections, processes and courses of action that create exchange and link things with one another. Such thinking maintains logics that are oriented to the intensity, range and quality of relationships. And it generates forms of knowledge that accrues from conversations, dialogues, interactions and interventions. At the beginning of the new millennium networks have become the most powerful figure of thought operating on the way we conceive the organization of our world: networks dominate the prevailing structures of cultural, economic and military power. They are the digital age's ubiquitous object of desire, a new force that directs our feelings, thought and action with the promise of a flexibilization of our relationships and an expansion of our possibilities.

15 Thus, there seems to be little difference between activity and outcome in the politics of network operation. To some extent, as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri note in their discussion of distributed relationships, the organization becomes an end in itself.<sup>6</sup> That is to say, network organization is both *content* and *achievement*. It entails the act as well as what is produced by the act. As networks are largely defined through the performative acts in which they congregate, they gather topological

presence through an ongoing transfer of relationality, meanings and values into the realm of political action. This process does not contend for a new static category of space, but draws attention to performativity as the fundamental logic of social life today. It implies changes characteristic of agency in relation to networking as such, but also reverberates in new organizational and spatial patterns as well as in the production of network actors themselves.

The global reality of the concurrency of the diffusion and consolidation, expansion and restriction, opening and delimitation of social and spatial organization suggests that the types of produced orders will often be contradictory and disputed, that networks can comprehend tasks of both linkage and isolation, and that the existence lived in networks is not antithetical to a life in parallel worlds. Neutral zones do not exist without relationships, and relationality does not exist without isolation. The conflict-laden multiplication of flows of goods, people and information and the concurrent proliferation of encapsulated zones, special areas and extra-state regions show that we can assume neither a change of spatial organizational forms, nor a dichotomy between defined territory and network, nor the inferiority of one spatial form as opposed to the superiority of another. The challenge associated with an investigation of network creativities lies in tracing the strategic alliance between both forms, identifying the politics of power expansion and searching for spaces of action within the operation of these politics. What do the enmeshments of art, architecture and politics that form into networks look like in specific terms? What forces can these encounters liberate and what opportunities do they offer for the formation of self-determined forms of action and collaboration? What sorts of free spaces can develop in the midst of an all-embracing network situation and how does such spatial creativity relate to collective processes?



Lost Highway Expedition, Summer 2006

Before going into the organization of network creativity in more detail, it will be helpful to explain what we understand as constituting the expanded field of art and architecture that we want to use as a central reference point in our inquiries. Our focus here is less on the praxis of planning and design and their theoretical analysis and contextualization than on the newly emerging intellectual praxis of architecture. In the context of political and social questions, this praxis is producing interventions, experiments and laboratory-like situations in order to generate a new understanding of architecture via an investigation of spatial interconnections and participation in social and physical transformations. The concept of architecture employed here thus relates above all to those processes in which questions of public and social space, questions of territoriality, cultural difference and the politics of mobility, are addressed via participation in the design of project flows rather than via the level of object design. Such an architecture, which is removed from the autonomous sphere of architectural production, is now locating its operational capacity in temporary and practically oriented alliances, in the collective investigation and production of spatial situations and in the creative subversion of organizational forms. This process often results in a deliberate displacement and blurring of the roles, areas of competence and cultural dispositives via which a project is supposed to be made recognizable and assessable as a form of architecture. Many of the practices considered here are directed not only against the institutional structures in which they are supposed to be represented but also use culture as a radical dispositive in order to produce their own referential systems for social encounters and forms of material expression that alter our ideational world.

16 This framework also helps to elucidate our reference to art via the tension between artistic production and the prevailing obsession with the immaterial production of creativity as an ever increasing part of the overall production of cognitive

capital. Social and creative capital are the new world markets of the late capitalist politics of growth, which in the past two decades has generated a specific change in the relationship between art and the economy via the circuits of money, institutions, curatorial activity, exhibition operations and art criticism. Marina Gržinić describes the new relationship as 'civilizational kinship', which presents itself to the First World as a natural and unavoidable process and involves surmounting cultural borders in order to extend this 'civilizational alliance' into undeveloped territories that have been excluded by the state.<sup>7</sup> One has only to recall the short-term strategic investment by the West in cultural infrastructures and exhibition programmes in the Balkans and Eastern Europe following the fall of the Iron Curtain and the effects of new 'location decisions' and the rapid severance of relationships. On the other hand, it should be noted that dissident networks have formed in the wake of these developments, networks that have brought together individuals from the artistic and economic fields with squatters, activists NGOs and local community projects and that have created autonomous production sites. In the region encompassed by the former Yugoslavia alone, dozens of such network sites have emerged, including the Centre for New Media\_kuda.org in Novi Sad, [mama] in Zagreb, Metelkova in Ljubljana, Prelom kolektiv in Sarajevo, CZKD (Centre for Cultural Decontamination) in Belgrade and Press to Exit in Skopje. These and similar sites are important reference points when we refer to practices that claim the artistic field as part of their radius of action. The field that is thereby generated contains loosely linked communication and collaboration platforms in which artists, architects, intellectuals, media activists and many other individuals have joined together to develop their project alliances in the interstitial zones of the institutionalized art field and to operate them on a largely autonomous basis.

These expansive networks based on informal social organization are interwoven with the politics of global deregulation via a complex process of interaction. In order to extend boundaries and to exert control over larger areas, this politics also needs unregulated spheres where other interests gain access and dissolve the logic of cause and effect into multidirectional co-implications. Thus, it is precisely at the point where global deregulation is reflected in the experience of social realities that it also becomes an instrument that can be used against it. By abrogating the network-like expansion of formal structures it simultaneously facilitates diversions of ends and the striking of unanticipated paths. This reversal makes manifest two important characteristics of network action. On the one hand, instructions are not simply transferred from one place to another; rather, instructions are utilized, altered for one's own purposes and, if necessary, directed against the instructors. In other words, we are speaking



Gas station near Ruma, Serbia, 2006

here of network action's characteristic of transformation. This is linked in turn with the other characteristic: it is not only the case that the information moved over network channels can abrogate something but that the gesture of informing and abrogating itself represents a transferable technology.

In its video and text installation *A/S/L (Age/Sex/Location)*, the Raqs Media Collective, a group of media practitioners based in New Delhi, uses the different masquerades of identities in chat-rooms and call centres to shed light on migratory experiences between online and offline worlds, between centres and peripheries. The group writes: 'Data outsourcing displaces the "Centre-Periphery" binary, by creating a fluctuating continuum between discrete spaces through the telematic pipelines of the new economy... In the context of online labour, the transformation of identities is an index of the reified, object status of the call centre worker, an Othering, of the self. The call centre worker performs at two levels; once as a disembodied Midwestern "Ruth", and alongside as a polymorphing chat-room diva. She clocks in at the call centre, and logs into the chat-room within the course of the same workday, at the same workstation.'<sup>8</sup> 'Ruth' embodies different marginalities with different levels of access to what identifies itself as the centre. The marginality of the position of call-centre workers consists in the connection of their own economic situation with the territorial marginality of their location. However, with its performances and protocols, the online conversation itself generates and reproduces centrality in that it supplies the centre of today's global economy.



Another site of this simultaneous separation and intertwinement of network and territory, virtual space and real existence, can be found in Romanian internet cafes, where young people work in shifts to train the avatars of clients in faraway California. 'Power levelling' is the common euphemism for this improvement in remote 'gold farms' of the opportunities for avatars in virtual gaming worlds. In China, the largest market for virtual gold farms, hundreds of thousands of gaming workers ('gold farmers') labour in this specialized business in continuous shifts to produce virtual commodities and market them via international brokers.<sup>9</sup> The network of gaming industry sweatshops in Asia and eastern Europe reinforces the authority of territorial distance in a very

similar way to a proposal by the Austrian Minister of Justice in 2004 – allegedly for financial reasons – to operate an Austrian-financed prison on Romanian territory for Romanians convicted of crimes in Austria. The exchange enabled by this authority provides space for an expansion of interventions across the borders of territories, as also seen in the case of the more than 1,000 secret CIA flights over the territory of the European Union<sup>10</sup> and other secret operations involving the outsourcing of labour, the application of law and organization. The deployment of extra-legal enclaves and camps such as Guantánamo Bay or the networks of 'black sites', the jargon for secret prisons operated outside one's own national territory, attest to a new dimension of the fragmentation of geographical clarities, one which consciously deploys shadowy presences, camouflages and cover-ups as tactics in order to establish fluid borders. In an instrumental respect, this fluidification points to an incessant reconstitution of the conditions governing the establishment of connections. In a spatial respect, it means a radical transformation of places into a permanently floating apparatus that serves to steer flows and currents. This offensive ambiguity accelerates the deterioration of fixed alliances and creates a climate in which it is no accident that art and architecture become network actors amidst the current upheavals in geocultural spaces. The ubiquitous deterritorialization of sites is being accompanied by a diminishment of their material and conceptual attachment to the physical and empirical singularities of a place and a corresponding increase in nomadic and migratory currents in which change takes place. Discursive sites, fictional self-formations and relational spatial practices have become key aspects of creative engagement.<sup>11</sup> At one end of the spectrum we find globally dispersed collective practices and temporary project platforms such as the *Lost Highway Expedition*, which track the multifaceted process of global spatial transformation. At the other end we find the competition between biennale festivals to present extraordinary places and images of our time. In each of these cases, the new sites that are formed are constituted by systems of practices that are not exempt from social, economic and political pressures. In her widely discussed essay, 'One Place After Another', Miwon Kwon emphasizes the particular relationship between mobility privileges and cultural and economic power. In reaction to the conditions of a mobilized market economy, she argues, compensation fantasies and a hidden complicity with the privileges of nomadic self-organization are spreading in the art and architecture industries as a counterpoint to tendencies to fragmentation and alienation. Art and architecture are discretely profiting from the acceleration of the circuits of attentiveness to 'undiscovered' sites.<sup>12</sup>

Members of the Roma community collecting reusable materials  
Novi Sad, 2006



Novi Sad Radio and Television (RTNS) building  
bombed by NATO alliance on 3 May 1999

Taking this idea a step further entails looking beyond a critique of art and architecture as stooges of global economic forces. In recent years, experimental approaches have increasingly coalesced around platforms that confront the rapid consumption of one place after another with a model of self-organized creation. Networks are the new sites that are being shaped by dialogues, connections, allocations, superimpositions and intersections. The orientation to the site has thus morphed into a creative participation in translocal spaces of action. These spaces of action are places of participation growing out of a constant negotiation of the conditions of taking part, i.e. out of a constant subversion of expected functionalities and a shifting of definitions of what actually constitutes participation. They are not tied to a specific duration or concrete place and yet are based on principles of mutual responsibility and shared horizons. The goal of many projects is the disruption of the linearity of development processes, jurisdictions and role prescriptions in favour of a horizontally layered sphere of collective production, the changes of which constantly throw up new questions. In contrast to the participatory projects of the 1960s and 1970s, the concern here is not with the production of a concrete identity-establishing place but with a form of involvement that is achieved via participation in networks. In his *A Grammar of the Multitude*, Paolo Virno writes of this physiognomy of 'participation in the foreign': 'The many, in as much as they are many, are those who share the feeling of "not feeling at home" and who, in fact, place this experience at the centre of their own social and political praxis.'<sup>13</sup> The decisive transformation that takes place in a society without substantial communities lies in the change from the specific to common places,<sup>14</sup> from the location in specific communities to an orientation to principles of reciprocity and the public intellect as a common resource in any situation. This strengthens the level of the common, conspicuous singularity, the level of identity-less and circulating self-organization at which artistic and architectural production operates today in an all-encompassing state of transformation. This state is not only an object of its engagement but at the same time defines the most important parameters through which it takes effect.



Hotel Jugoslavija  
Located in New Belgrade, Serbia, and opened in 1969 as one of the most luxurious hotels in the region, it was used as an accommodation for celebrities and high officials visiting Belgrade; designed by Lavoslav Horvat; bombed by NATO alliance on 7 May 1999; in 2007 Casinos Austria announced plans to transform it into a luxury casino

## PLATFORMS OF POLITICAL ACTION

In their investigation of social and cultural change, network practices in art and architecture are not based on the reclamation of an external sphere but rather lay claim to a space inhabited by many in order to effectuate processes of communication and collaboration. These investigations are less interested in a configuration of analytical depth than in bringing together forces that have to do with a particular question, in the collective production of a continually reshaped polymorphism. They aspire to an expansion of the prevailing field of reference and as a result often alter the framework of their own enquiry in the course of their development. Their continuously self-organized and autopoietic behaviour generates the conditions under which

situative spaces of action form. The articulation of different interests and the extension of scope thus emerge as the most urgent task of a project culture that aims to provide scope for change in an interactive context involving many different motivations. In order to achieve this, the current spatial organization of interests is comprehended as an oscillation within networks and the movements of its transformation are followed. Networks are not an arbitrary option but a fact of the change in forms of political and social coexistence. The articulation of political engagement via creative thought and action thus faces a dual task: on the one hand, that of evading the prescribed situation by changing the rules of the game, and on the other that of multiplying and intensify-



The 'Fresh Motel' along the highway E70 in western Serbia, 2006

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Unfinished villa on Fruška Gora mountain near Novi Sad, Serbia, 2006



Finished villa on Fruška Gora mountain near Novi Sad, Serbia, 2006



The interventionist projects of the second socio-aesthetic approach utilize the fact that the neo-liberal restructuring of environments affects different spatial types in different localities, which, above and beyond their differences, form a network of strategic points for the reformulation of geographical zones, boundaries and intersections. To be able to operate translocally, the global market requires different instruments for the coordination of local procedures: technological information systems, political regulation and international marketing. Such spatial-political instruments are often corrupted in artistic practices to the extent that they are interrupted, redirected and utilized for one's own purposes. In the midst of the networked apparatus of translocal societal ordering processes, economic and military operations, these practices articulate their resistance by making use of the structures, procedures and possibilities of network production outside the assigned role pattern. In their movement through physical and social spaces, they create new models of order, relationships and situations. The central question for such an approach concerns how, when drawing on network resources and network capacities, zones of autonomy can be created vis-à-vis the utilization of intellectual creativity for the expansion of cognitive capitalism.

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Put another way, this form of approach involves an exploration of the possible ways in which networks not only offer a model of the efficient organization and

In the words of the Raqs Media Collective: 'To do this, the practitioner probably has to invent, or discover, protocols of conversation across sites, across different histories of locatedness in the network; to invent protocols of resource building and sharing, create structures within structures and networks within networks. Mechanisms of flexible agreements about how different instances of enactment can share a contiguous semantic space will have to be arrived at. And as we discover these "protocols", their different ethical, affective and cognitive resonances will immediately enter the equation. We can then also begin to think of art practice as enactment, as process, as elements in an interaction or conversation within a network.'<sup>15</sup> Thus, in recent years two interwoven approaches have emerged that attempt to open up culture to the investigation of alternative aggregations and forms of action. One approach is based on the further development of a cartographic praxis in art and architecture that attempts to express urban transformation via the complex tension linking society and space to one another. Alongside these mapping projects a processually oriented praxis is developing that connects separate places and communities and creates symbolic sites of political manifestations or counter-manifestations. Both forms of geocultural engagement give expression to the way in which artistic praxis can explore possibilities of intervening in the production of knowledge archives and becoming politically operative via cultural effects.

The value of the first approach lies in its capacity to generate snapshots of a globalized culture that attempts to structure transnational flows in accordance with their own logics. In the interaction of the globalized world with a variety of parallel worlds, the crises, conflicts and imbalances characterizing processes of societal change are brought to light. In addition, these protocols generate new forms of the symbolization of sociocultural transformation, in which the depiction of translocal networks plays a fundamental role. Here, territorial realities are distanced from the familiar framework of geographical representation

and are instead articulated via spatial relationships and the extension of territories to include ideational worlds, flows, contexts, images and peripheries. The ideational worlds and cognitive interconnections generated by way of this cartographic praxis show that mappings represent not only a powerful model of the exercise of power and control but also an instrument of change. As Bruno Latour argues, 'Images demonstrate transformation, not information.'<sup>16</sup> The aesthetics of dissident cartographies and the way in which they point to existing power constellations or articulate new social structures open up an additional dimension that facilitates interventions in symbolic worlds and the creation of new symbolic relationships.

economic valorization of creativity (as in the cases of culture marketing, art tourism and cultural industries) but are also a model of societal self-organization.

The process of rethinking this type of creative production, which has been increasingly emerging over the last 10 years in the expanded fields of art and architecture, involves a change in the relationship between one's own work and that which represents cultural experience. This altered approach to production is no longer concerned with designing a space for cultural experience but, on the contrary, with facilitating cultural experience that creates a space whose contours are not yet fixed. That which the type of creativity we are considering here refers to thus has much more to do with a communal organization of cultural and spatial production than with the creation of monumental spaces for culture. It is participation that generates the site rather than the site generating participation. To use Mika Hannula's term, this 'politics of small gestures' consists in art and architecture participating in processes of meaning production that take place in the politicized public sphere without taking part in the competition to produce the most eye-catching product.<sup>17</sup> Under the conditions of the all-appropriating cultural turn in globalization, this creativity therefore often expresses itself most forcefully by retreating from the circuits of the industry of the spectacle and engaging in the networked production of a series of such gestures, sketches and experiments. This process, as Félix Guattari formulates it in *Chaosmosis*, involves a denormalization and displacement of organizational mechanisms (research, exhibition, planning, etc.) in which production acquires meaning, a mobilization of levels of consciousness to reconstruct 'an operational narrativity, that is, functioning beyond information and communication, like an existential crystallization of ontological heterogenesis'.<sup>18</sup>

A decisive aspect of this mobilization lies in the experience of the upheavals that are taking place, i.e. in the plurality of situations in which the global change in production and communication forms establishes points of contact with the lives of individuals, rather than in a changing transcendent schema of temporal and spatial distribution and organization. In the radical case, these experiential moments are found in the sudden change of social systems, as in the case of Eastern Europe, or in the explosion of informal settlement forms on the peripheries of many large European cities. In other cases, such moments are found in micro-situations in which the forces of globalization become locally concentrated and new economic nodal points develop, lay claim to unregulated spaces, seek new staging posts for the commercial cultural industries or force urban quarters to be reshaped in the interest of geopolitical or urban-strategic speculation. All these situations are shaped by experiences of upheaval and not by experiences of rule observance. Decisions cannot resort to a constraining framework of norms formulated by the state or another form of authority. The categories of experience are defined by individuals and thus facilitate a production of subjects that were not present as such previously. The plane of reference deriving from these experiences and the situation immanent to them is the plane of the anthropological normality of life, the level of many momentary contacts, friendships and bonds as well as disagreements, enmities and fears. The experience of upheaval thus transects many levels of everyday existence in which a necessity for new decisions always enforces itself, new qualities emerge and new alliances are formed. What is decisive is therefore neither a prepotent global sphere nor an essentialist local mindset but rather the uneven terrain of unforeseen occurrences, irritations and disturbances, which emerges in the moment of confluence between unequal forces and provokes a whole series of unforeseen paths and situations.

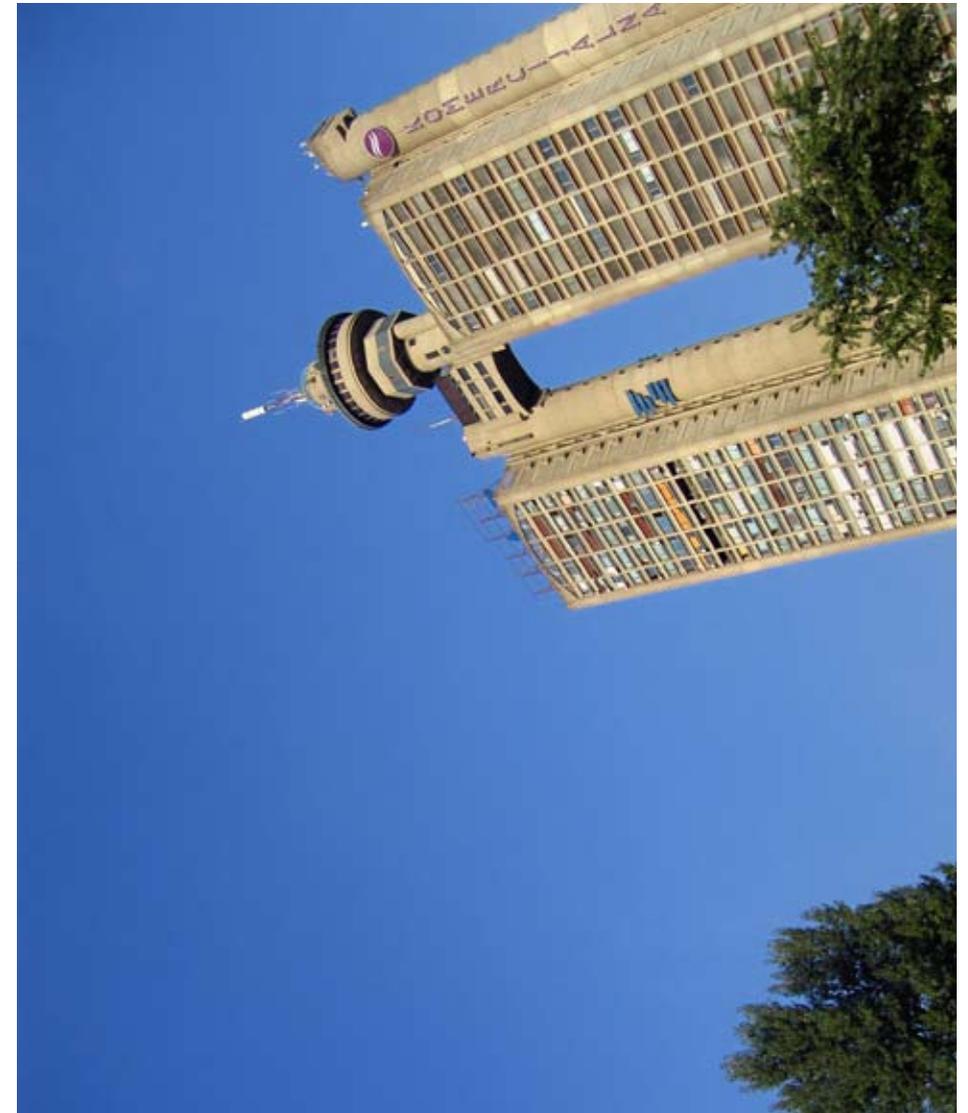
## POTENTIALITIES

The formation of networks facilitates a shift from an enforced participation in upheavals to a *utilization* of these upheavals. The logic that is mobilized in this movement provokes a new relationship between context and situation, between



Along the highway E70 in western Serbia, 2006

space and time. It generates a series of upheavals in what Antonio Negri describes as the economically administered removal of time in our epoch: 'Time is removed – the mind is, as Gertrude Stein wants, a space; theory is the geography of this space. Time is a transcendental schematism accomplished because presupposed. Therefore it is ecstasy of effectual Power, of the capitalist analytic of subsumption.'<sup>19</sup> It is precisely this geography that is affected in terms of its central anchorage when in experimental praxis maps are not read but rather made use of and laws are not observed but rather utilized. The difference between reading and making use of, between observance and utilization, lies in the possibility of a negligible deviation from what constitutes the respective prevailing norm. This possibility emerges when the time removed from space is brought into play again: the time to traverse geographically fixed borders, the time to explore new spaces, the time to experience collectively. For many network actors, collective enactment, valorization and experimentation relating to structures of deregulation and the production of a 'cognitariat' (Franco Berardi) decoupled from capital represents a more effective means for shaping reality than a purely oppositional attitude in terms of engagement and a universal counter-theory in terms of conception. The artistic or architectural work integrated in this shift is no longer a space that can be traversed but rather a time that is lived through. Network action is thus an endeavour without a guarantee of success, an endeavor to achieve simultaneity and to create conditions that facilitate this. The self-organization of creative praxis is based on a shaping of time in which form is a question of the production of relationships. At this point urban production meets the contemporary articulation of art practices.



High-rise construction located in New Belgrade, Serbia, designed by Mihejlo Mitrovic (1972-1980). The 30-storey residential tower and the 26-storey office tower are connected by a bridge structure located on the 26th floor

Artistic and architectural praxis thereby shifts attention from the conditions of the respective place and its institutional actualities to the complex potentialities inherent in every situation. It formulates an approach that sees the political possibilities of change less in the external explanation of a local situation, in the critical analysis of its layers and depths and in the planning of strategies than in the actualization of the potential of the prevailing contradictions, conflicts and ambiguities of a situation. The integration of architecture in the continual flow of network forces has led to the fact that it is also beginning to look for its action logic beyond an analytic and planning intervention in spatial configurations and to develop a new interest in collaborations with practices relating to the appropriation and utilization of prevailing situations. Interim uses, provisional spatial solutions, ephemeral buildings and relational architecture are common catchphrases used to describe this architecture of upheaval – an architecture that has become fluid and that supports different spontaneous articulations of spaces of possibility without interpreting their fundamental instability as a deficiency. Provisional forms of cultural participation are forming in the convergence of networks.



Provisional solutions are commonly thought of as a form of compensation that is supposed to counterbalance existing deficits: a deficit in terms of infrastructure, accommodation or public assembly sites but also a deficit in terms of jail cells or experientially enriched urban space. Such provisional solutions fulfil specific functional requirements. They play a strategic role for the dynamic unfolding of forces of nation-state government and post-Fordist production. However, what if we were to briefly leave aside the stipulation of functionality and employ a concept of compensation understood as a mode of production that is not tied to the idea of a deficit? What if we were to comprehend compensation as a type of production that acts from within itself, beyond a relationship to that which is lacking or prescribed by way of a particular logic? Such a mindset distances the concept of compensation from the field of local, economic, political and historically

bound dependencies and the knowledge that supports and maintains these dependencies. This leads to a shift onto unstable ground that offers as yet unknown utilization possibilities, which it can liberate or refuse in equal measure. Such a concept of compensation is indicated by the ontology and politics that Giorgio Agamben discerns in the significance of potentiality for this endeavour: '[Potentiality] is that through which Being finds itself *sovereignly*, which is to say, without anything preceding or determining it (*superiorem non recognoscens*) other than its own ability not to be. And an act is sovereign when it realizes itself by simply taking away its own potentiality not to be, letting itself be, giving itself to itself.'<sup>20</sup> If we follow Agamben in seeing this capacity in the radical freedom from the compulsion to actualize, the question arises as to the way in which art and architecture can intervene in the distribution of ways of being to the extent that a wealth of splinter worlds forms out of the mobilizing forces of upheaval, worlds whose intensities and aggregations represent something new beyond the dominant reference system.

24 Can the connectivity of networks provide a relational framework for the production of aesthetic provisionalities with which the instabilities of our contemporary state can be appropriated and lived out? Can inherently unstable network action

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facilitate sustainable political participation in which deregulation is utilized for a shifting of empowerment from a centre to an archipelago of peripheral existences? Is such a model restricted to an exclusive space of artistic production or can such a potential also be discerned in the prevailing realities of global networks? For instance, states such as Nigeria, Cameroon, Kenya, Uganda, Somalia, Rwanda and South Africa are now being linked together by the boom in rapidly growing mobile phone networks across Africa. In a period of only 10 years, from 1998 to 2008, the number of mobile phone users on the continent has grown from 2 million to over 150 million, and an ever-increasing number of private telecom companies are sharing in the high profits offered by this new and largely unregulated market. One of the first initiatives to take advantage of these thriving mobile phone networks is the Kenyan M-PESA: international money transfer via SMS. It is predicted that in the near future this system will be used to transfer over 100 billion US dollars annually to the continent by African emigrants, money that will play a significant role in accelerating economic growth. This development is being interpreted by neo-liberal intellectuals as heralding immense economic and social changes resulting from private-sector activity rather than state and international aid provision, while leftist economists are warning of the dangers inherent in the interplay of micro-enterprises and precarity. Meanwhile the new technology is finding new forms of use in Kenya. The Nairobi People's Settlement Network (NPSN), for example, uses mobile telephony and the internet to organize massive resistance to slum clearances in the pursuit of profit. In 2006 Kibera in Nairobi, Africa's largest slum region with more than 80,000 inhabitants,<sup>21</sup> was the site of the first self-organized meeting of activists from a range of slum areas, who used flash mobbing to oppose corruption and exploitation. Their spontaneously coordinated gatherings at sites where clearances had been scheduled resulted in the prevention of bulldozer deployment and the creation of new structures of understanding. With the help of the well established mobile phone network, the population thus selectively transformed the micro-enterprise structure and its calculated predictability into a system of unforeseen self-coordination and made the network technologies of domination into an instrument of communal emergence.

In this variable geometry of networks lie the structural preconditions for collective action.<sup>22</sup> Networks constitute attractive action alliances not because they form a closed power structure but because they promise the possibility of transformation. In the moment of upheaval they become reservoirs for the hope of finding collective possibilities of participation and change. As a result, network action constitutes a continual regrouping and reshaping of goals and components that allow for the transformation of sites of passive experience into sites of resistance. Transformation is itself thus claimed as a site of resistance. Network creativity repositions the enforced participation in upheaval as a form of utilization in which the network becomes not a means but a site of its own transformation. Put another way, what we are designating here as a network encompasses a topological tension between the connectivity of this structure and the ideas and meanings continually being developed by its actors.<sup>23</sup> The role of this tension consists in fending off the topological stability that would transform the network into fixed structures with an inherent identity. In a political sense, network action is thus based on a concept of deformation: networks form topological possibilities from which new protagonists are generated as network effects. This means that there is a fundamental asymmetry between the prevailing morphology of a network and its actors, an elementary moment of non-recognition and conflict, which is incorporated in the relationship between present and future structures. This asymmetry does not only provide the basis for a reshaping of the individual within a new relational ethics. It also shapes the unstable site of network creativity through an incessant and irreducible transformation of ends that are never given.



- 1 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2004), 83.
- 2 Ivan Kučina, 'The Instrumentalisation of Friendship', in *Lost Highway Expedition*, ed. Alenka Gregorič (Ljubljana: Galerija Škuc, 2006), 49.
- 3 See <http://www.schoolofmissingstudies.net/sms-lhe.htm>
- 4 One of the first print publications arising from this project is the photo collection *Lost Highway Expedition Photo Book*, eds. Katherine Carl and Srdjan Jovanovic Weiss (Rotterdam: Veenman Publishers, 2007).
- 5 Angela Mellitopoulos, 'Corridor X', in *B-Zones. Becoming Europe and Beyond*, ed. Anselm Franke (Barcelona: Actar, 2006), 158.
- 6 Hardt and Negri, *ibid.* note 1.
- 7 Marina Gržinić, 'Performative Alternative Economics', in *Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies*, ed. Oliver Ressler/New Media Center kuda.org (Frankfurt am Main: Revolver, 2005), 22.
- 8 Raqs Media Collective, 'A/S/L: Age/Sex/Location', in *Geography and the Politics of Mobility*, ed. Ursula Biemann (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2003), 84f.
- 9 Ge Jin, 'Chinese Goldfarmers in the Game World', *Consumers, Commodities & Consumption*, vol. 7, no. 2 (May 2006).
- 10 As the British newspaper *The Guardian* reported on 27 April 2006, an investigation by the European Parliament concluded that between 2001 and 2005 the CIA conducted over 1,000 secret flights transporting alleged terrorists across the territory of the European Union. See online: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2006/apr/27/usa.topstories3>
- 11 Claire Bishop, 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics', *October* 110 (2004): 51-79; Grant Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community + Communication in Modern Art* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004).
- 12 Miwon Kwon, 'One Place After Another: Notes on Site Specificity', *October* 80 (1997): 88.
- 13 Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life* (New York: Semiotext(e), 2004), 35.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 38f.
- 15 Raqs Media Collective, 'X Notes on Practice: Stubborn Structures and Insistent Seepage in a Networked World', in *Immaterial Labour: Work, Research & Art*, eds. Melanie Gilligan and Marina Vishmidt (London and New York: Black Dog Publishing, 2004). See online: <http://www.raqsmediacollective.net/texts1.html>
- 16 Bruno Latour, 'There is no information, only transformation', in *Uncanny Networks: Dialogues with the Virtual Intelligentsia*, ed. Geert Lovink (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 157.
- 17 Mika Hannula, 'The Blind Leading the Naked – The Politics of Small Gestures', in *Art, City and Politics in an Expanding World: Writings from the 9th International Istanbul Biennial*, ed. Deniz Ünsal (Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts, 2005), 193.
- 18 Félix Guattari, *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), 85.
- 19 Antonio Negri, *Time for Revolution* (London and New York: Continuum, 2003), 53.
- 20 Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 46.
- 21 See Robert Neuwirth, *Shadow Cities: A Billion Squatters, A New Urban World* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 67-99.
- 22 Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 156.
- 23 Tiziana Terranova, *Network Culture: Politics for the Information Age* (London: Pluto Press, 2004), 155f.

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