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Publication Date
2015

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global activism

Art and Conflict in the 21st Century

edited by Peter Weibel

published by
ZKM | Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe, Germany
The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA / London, England

This book was published on the occasion of the exhibition
global aCtIVISm at the ZKM | Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe
December 14, 2013–March 30, 2014

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instead invokes a classical and rather traditionally "feminine" image to be identified with. The reason could be simple: women, whose everyday life takes place within the confines of a traditional, stereotyped gender role, will recognize themselves in these symbols and can thereby identify with the group.

What is remarkable is that the groups which are best known and seen as the most important by the general public in Western countries tend to come from countries in which the situation of women is not at the same standard as in Western countries or that of the standard of the aforementioned "fourth wave."

Sociologist Saskia Sassen argues that people from Western societies become consumers of their life and surroundings.[27] They accept (for example, their nationality, their social status, etc.), without questioning and challenging, and in this they stand in stark contrast to the "makers," who themselves mold and create, but who tend to originate from different geographical and political contexts. Protests by these activists, defined by Sassen as "makers," are especially readily taken up by Western media, because it is easy to portray them as heroes. The general population perceives them as abstract fighters who are acting against a geographically distant problem. Through their geographical and social distance, uninvolved viewers don't risk being pushed from their "consumer" into a "maker" role, but can declare their solidarity in the shape of easy and safe actions.

In particular the activities in India, the Saudi women, as well as both the Femen and Pussy Riot groups gained media attention in recent years and garnered sympathies and considerable international popularity. The fact that individual states – as mentioned here, Saudi Arabia, Russia, India, as well as further countries not mentioned in the context of this text – have ratified conventions on the protection of women's rights does not, as has been explained, automatically mean an actual executive assistance concerning the improvement or preservation of women's rights at state level, which is why civil groups intervene and assume responsibility. These groups have taken on an enormously important position in society, for they enable women to feel like they belong and show them that – apart from a few setbacks – their efforts are rewarded in regard to their position in society: slowly but surely.

Translated from the German by Jeremy Gaines.

27
See: Saskia Sassen, "Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy," lecture at re:publica 2014, Berlin, May 7, 2014, video recording available online at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=gKaA-mXhn-4, accessed 06/25/2014.

Rita Raley

The Ordinary Arts of Political Activism

"What is to be done when nothing can be done?"[1]
(Franco "Bifo" Berardi)

Tents were piled in the center of the ZKM | Karlsruhe exhibit hall, multicolored but uniform in size and shape, sculptural objects suggesting the Occupy movement of which they are one of the few recognizable icons. Handmade and printed posters, leaflets, and mixed material artifacts of various protest campaigns were attached to a large fence across from the assembled tents. A photographic record of global activism as viral mass-mediated event was presented on an adjacent wall: green-lettered signs memorializing Neda, the "Standing Man" of Taksim Square, an officer teargassing a woman in a red dress in Gezi Park, the naked torsos of members of Femen, bodies amassed in parks and squares, police armed with guns, batons, riot shields, dogs. Even more spectacular was the bank of screens displaying Google image search results for keywords related to the *global aCtIVISm* exhibit: here, too, crowds, flags, masks, the iconography of political protest and revolution in the present, a circular system of reference that mobilizes affects and facilitates taxonomic recognition. Indeed, the exhibit perfectly captured the discursive construction of global activism, from the ghostly silence of abandoned camps and evacuated public spaces littered with traces of the violent conflicts that have gone before, to the visual documentation of multitudes.

The documentation of emptiness, of the aftermath of an assembly or intervention, commemorates that event as one that has materialized in a particular place and time and entered the historical record. For the referential schema of global activism, situated events acquire meaning in part through relationality, the mapping of connections among discrete incidents, the delineation of the patterns and lines of influence that would constitute a coordinated movement. "Global" in this context is a particular world-historical imaginary suggesting the mandate to articulate such connections – one occupied public square resonating with another as trigger, consequence, or common cause. Events not readily available to absorption within the imaginary of "global activism" are those whose utter singularity or situatedness thwarts efforts to abstract out from concrete circumstance to network diagram; those so bounded by time and circumstance that action

1
Franco Beradi, as quoted from: Konrad Becker and Jim Fleming (eds.), *Critical Strategies in Art and Media. Perspectives on New Cultural Practices*, Autonomedia, Brooklyn, (NY), 2010, p. 59.

does not cross the threshold to become event; or those so ordinary that they cannot be unambiguously differentiated from the same. There are myriad techniques for gaining a purchase on the global, among them the sharing of slogans, appropriation of images, and use of memes. But many activist practices are content to operate at the level of the micro or local and, while certainly aspirational with respect to effects and consequences, do not endeavor to resonate for the global as a "referential whole." In what sense does the common imaginary of activism as large-scale mediated event operating on the plane of the "global" inhibit the recognition and appreciation of everyday activities that may be informed by shared politics but differ significantly with respect to framing, organizational structure, and purpose? How might a consideration of modest art-activist activities facilitate a conscious de-emphasizing of the seemingly inevitable litmus test: what difference has it made, where "difference" is implicitly understood to entail widespread media recognition, policy changes, and visible structural transformation? What, after all, does it mean to *make a difference*?

There are strong conceptions of activism based on functions and institutions, the former emphasizing activities, mechanisms, and techniques ("a toolbox for revolution"), and the latter prioritizing actual organizations involved.[2] What tends to be elided in these taxonomies are everyday activities that are not perceptually or even epistemologically different from ordinary action. Activism in these terms might be conceived as that which introduces a certain rupture, blip, or glitch into the smooth normative unfolding of the everyday, whereby the ordinary is estranged from and doubled back upon itself, and different practices, routines, and habits are made possible. This is not a polemic that situates different models of activism in implicit competition or subjects them to metrics that assess performance outcomes, though it is precisely in response to such claims – that certain types of activist practice are most effective and therefore most deserving of investment – that I want both to echo the common refrain that small actions may have unforeseeable large consequences and to assert the value of the ordinary, the seemingly uneventful, on its own terms.

The stakes of the call to imagine a more expansive category of "global activism" are not necessarily those of academic or institutional classification, as in the notion that certain errors of definition and taxonomy need to be corrected for proper scholarship or that a new critical paradigm will enable new knowledge. It is undoubtedly the case that classification has material effects, for example, a reorientation of the discussion of global activism to account for the singular, nonspectacular, and ordinary might as a consequence bring socially engaged art practices – such as property renovation or environmental awareness projects – more closely into dialog with extant social and political movements.[3] But the stakes are even more fundamental in that they concern our understanding of systems of power, control, and orthodoxy. As Silvia Kolbowski indicates in a forum on the social artwork: "it's important to define activism broadly because power seeks out the imagination and the psyche as well as physical spaces and bank accounts."[4] That is, it is precisely because the imaginary of ordinary

2

See: Andrew Boyd and Dave Oswald Mitchell, *Beautiful Trouble. A Toolbox for Revolution*, OR Books, New York, 2012.

3

On artistic social practice see: Grant H. Kester, *Conversation Pieces. Community and Communication in Modern Art*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles (CA), 2004; Shannon Jackson, *Social Works. Performing Art, Supporting Publics*, Routledge, New York (NY), 2011; Jen Delos Reyes (ed.), *Open Engagement. An Anthology*, Publication Studio, Portland (OR), 2012; Nato Thompson (ed.), *Living as Form. Socially Engaged Art from 1991–2011*, The MIT Press, Cambridge (MA), 2012; Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells. Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, Verso, London, New York, 2012; Tom Finkelpearl, *What We Made. Conversations on Art and Social Cooperation*, Duke University Press, Durham (NC), London, 2013.

4

Sylvia Kolbowski, as quoted from: "Roundtable: The Social Artwork," in: *October*, no. 142, Fall 2012, pp. 74–85, here p. 81.



Fallen Fruit (David Burns, Matias Viegener, Austin Young), *Fallen Fruit of Silver Lake*, 2004–ongoing, public fruit map, dimensions variable

life and the social has been bent – constrained, conditioned, managed – by the forces of financial globalization that we need an imaginary of activism that recognizes, and thereby facilitates, creative efforts to cultivate the care of both self and community.

Even in the heart of agriculture-rich California, it is not uncommon to encounter oranges from Florida, or lemons from Mexico, on grocery shelves. In a sharp and playful commentary on global food production systems, Fallen Fruit, an art collaboration originally conceived in 2004 by David Burns, Matias Viegener, and Austin Young, endeavors to make the abundance of locally available fruit visible by constructing maps of trees growing on or over public property in Los Angeles.[5] Structured as guides for gleaners, these maps and occasional directed tours make accessible the fantastically fecund desert landscape that has been nearly engulfed by urban development and an intricate highway system discouraging pedestrian traffic. As Viegener notes of the buried agrarian history of Los Angeles, "[f]resh fruit holds a poignant place in the

5

See: http://fallenfruit.org, accessed 06/13/2014. Since 2013, Burns and Young have continued the collaborative work. See also: Dana Goodyear, "Eat a Free Peach: Mapping 'Public Fruit,'" in: *The New Yorker*, March 12, 2012, available online at: www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/culture/2012/03/mapping-public-fruit.html, accessed 06/13/2014.

mythology of California; early postcards often depict houses with swimming pools and orange trees against a backdrop of snow-covered mountains."[6] The project of Fallen Fruit, however, is not a nostalgic reanimation of a fabled past, but rather a pedagogic and situated response to "a globalized model of food production in which every step has been industrialized and monetized."[7] Read through the lens of a fruit map, urban neighborhoods become community gardens with oranges and lemons freely available to all.

Responding to a call from the *Journal of Aesthetics & Protest* for projects that were responsive to contemporary crises and proposed "generative solutions"[8] rather than stopping short at negative critique, Fallen Fruit has from the outset considered activism in noncontestatory terms. As Burns succinctly states of the techniques and sensibility of the "hyperbolically collaborative" project, there is "no opposition in a thing we do."[9] Still, there is a distinct politics in their environmental activism and foregrounding of questions of publics. Fallen Fruit is decidedly and adamantly not a guerrilla art organization, but they do strongly encourage participants to tinker with the physical and legal margins of public space. To explain: most metropolitan areas in the USA have legislation that prohibits the planting of fruit trees on public land, but fruit growing on branches that overhang a property line becomes public and legally available for harvesting. Excess fruit quickly becomes waste so collecting that which has fallen benefits both individual and community, but reaching up to pick fruit that is ambiguously situated in relation to a fence risks the violation of both legal and social contract. Apart from fostering dialog about ecological systems, then, Fallen Fruit also invites consideration of civic belonging and responsibility and of "new forms of located citizenship and community."[10] Participants are prompted to walk and perceive the urban environment "from a very different angle, akin perhaps to learning about the strata of pipelines, tunnels, and subterranean wiring under all cities."[11] As a "social geographic exercise,"[12] the maps and fruit trails produce the idea of a neighborhood and imagine the city as a playground, the rhythms of the walks interrupting the customary space-time arrangements produced by the transportation infrastructure particular to Los Angeles.

Part of a larger urban agricultural movement supported by environmental nonprofits and community arts foundations, Fallen Fruit has also turned its attention to different aspects of pomiculture: planting trees and making jam. In the spirit of eco-communes, locavores, and sustainable urbanists, the *Public Fruit Jam* project hosts "jam sessions" for the community that have the immediate practical purpose of preventing waste, and that also support the sharing of goods, recipes, and techniques. Its aspirations are modest and its sensibility is regional and generational (the punk rock of the millennials), but collaborative jam-making is nonetheless to be regarded as a communitarian practice. Akin to community gardens, food banks, and time banks, it prioritizes being – and making – in common. There is no monetary exchange, but the jam sessions do not operate according to a gift economy with the expectation of material return. The fruit-based economy

6
Matias Viegener, "Fallen Fruit," in: *Cabinet*, no. 23, 2006, pp. 68–72, here p. 69, available online at: http://cabinetmagazine.org/issues/23/viegener.php, accessed 06/13/2014.

7
Ibid., p. 72.

8
Ibid., p. 69.

9
Interview with David Burns, March 8, 2014.

10
As quoted from: Thompson 2012, p. 150.

11
Viegener 2006, p. 69.

12
Interview with David Burns, March 8, 2014.



Fallen Fruit (David Burns, Matias Viegener, Austin Young), *Public Fruit Jam* (Machine Project edition), 2008, public participatory performance, documentation photograph

produces not debt but rather what Lewis Hyde terms "feeling-bonds"[13] as its objective: social relations, then, instead of market relations. As Jörgen Svensson notes of so-termed "generosity projects" in a different context, "the broader phenomenon is really about food, people meeting each other, and an opportunity for increased communication."[14]

Fallen Fruit is not conceptually, aesthetically, or even practically complex: there is no mechanism or theoretical paradigm to decode. But a project such as this is critically significant precisely because it goes to the heart of the question of what constitutes a meaningful art-activist intervention. It touches upon issues of food security, but it is not about immediate survival; it invests deeply in fantasies of social engagement, but not fundamental social transformation. It has extended to other cities, for example, Fallen Fruit Atlanta, but it remains local in orientation, and the development has been modular rather than scalar. And while the effect on the lifeworld of participants is not negligible – there is a politics of momentary enjoyment – subjecting those effects to calculative assessment so as to determine efficacy would be an absurd bureaucratic exercise. Moreover, to insist upon seamless modulation from the micro scale (making lemon marmalade in the neighborhood of Silver Lake) into the macro (measurable damage to the industrial agricultural system) would be to employ evaluative criteria according to which most political work could be said to fail. There are, of course, different models of activist practice, different tactics for different moments and different situations, but scalar transition persists as the benchmark for critical judgment. Accordingly, in the popular imagination, an activist intervention such as Occupy Wall Street can only be said to have made a difference, to truly matter, if it spawns multiple occupied sites, or if it becomes possible to abstract out from specific concrete circumstance and identify a movement.

However, the impetus for the line of inquiry I am exploring here is not the Occupy movement per se, but rather the practices of care that supported it – the encampments, the dwelling spaces, complete with libraries, medical facilities, food services, clothing

13
Lewis Hyde, *The Gift. Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property*, Vintage Books, New York, 1979, p. 56.

14
Jörgen Svensson, "Four Projects," in: Ted Purves (ed.), *What We Want Is Free. Generosity and Exchange in Recent Art*, State University of New York Press, Albany (NY), 2005, pp. 47–60, here p. 59.

dispensaries, and communication centers. Many ethnographies of the movement have still to be written, but there are striking resemblances between the carefully and creatively tended encampments of Occupy and socially engaged art practices as ways of living, from Fallen Fruit to Basurama's work with urban waste, and from the Project Row Houses in Houston and Theaster Gates' Dorchester Projects in Chicago to Ithaca Hours and Julieta Aranda and Anton Vidokle's *Time/Bank*.[15] Such small-scale interventions in the social field combine activism, art, pedagogy, sociology, and politics, and they are less intent on disruption qua disruption than they are on creating social relations in the immediate present, "social building that brings itself into being wherever and whenever it can."[16] They stir the imagination precisely because they teach us that we are stakeholders in the worlds they might make possible, worlds not produced as fixed objects but rather experienced as they come into existence. And now both the Occupy encampments and social practices are objects of curation, institutional entities despite their sitedness "beyond the white cube" and "in the real world." This is not, however, to suggest absolute commensurability among these movements and practices, not then to situate "the activist" on a plane of equivalence from Occupy to the arts organization Creative Time. But the abstraction of the category of "the activist" makes it possible to articulate temporary, nonessential commonalities among disparate practices and to identify shared investments. A mapping project such as Fallen Fruit is for this reason nicely illustrative: though it is extensible and available for versioning, it is inextricably situated in place, indexical operations linking map to territory both physical and imagined.

California state law stipulates that there should be more than one hundred public access ways to the coast in the elite beach community of Malibu. Sharp cliffs, narrow roads, and overdevelopment, coupled with a deep local resistance to what is regarded as intrusion, has limited public access to the seventeen available sites, nearly all of which are hidden from plain sight. The Los Angeles Urban Rangers were the first to offer a map of the privately developed public coastline, a route planned as a "safari" into the mystifying territory of camouflaged paths and false trespassing notices (2007–2010).[17] This expressive activity takes its place alongside of piracy and parkour: embracing risk, transgressing and disrupting a given system, it is adaptable and responsive to its environment. Another ranger-led safari into the borderlands between public and private space took participants to the Los Angeles river, drawing attention to the civic project of revitalization, bringing water consciousness to the fore, along with the history of water in the L.A. area (2011).[18] In so doing, it shifted the usual focus on the river from film production to environmental history, the site's cracked concrete slabs as the residue of interested decrepitude and decades of battles over water rights.

Claire Bishop and others have noted that the proliferation of socially engaged art practices not incidentally coincides with widespread neoliberal divestment of public institutions, and the

15

For a pedagogic account of the techniques of artistic social practice, see Pablo Helguera, *Education for Socially Engaged Art. A Materials and Techniques Handbook*, Jorge Pinto Books, New York (NY), 2011.

16

Blake Stimson and Gregory Sholette, *Collectivism after Modernism. The Art of Social Imagination after 1945*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis (MN), 2007, p. 13.

17

See: http://laurbanrangers.org/site/malibu, accessed 06/13/2014.

18

For an overview of recent public art projects engaged with L.A. River revitalization, see Allison Carruth, "A Brief History of Public Art and the L.A. River," in: *Artbound*, March 20, 2014, available online at: www.kcet.org/arts/artbound/counties/los-angeles/brief-history-of-public-art-the-la-river.html, accessed 06/13/2014.

19

See: Claire Bishop, "Participation and Spectacle: Where Are We Now?" in: Thompson 2012, pp. 34–45, here p. 45.

20

See: www.echoparkfilmcenter.org, accessed 06/13/2014.

concomitant expectation that private agencies and individuals should perform the work of care.[19] Instead of comprehensive public housing initiatives we have artist-led development projects. Instead of civic ordinances we have guerrilla maps of coastlines. And instead of K-12 public schooling and literacy programs we have the Echo Park Film Center Filmmobile, a solar-powered traveling cinema made out of a school bus with its seats removed that also offers film production training to marginalized populations in their own neighborhoods.[20] In such community platforms and activities, there is a clear negotiation of modes of knowledge that are propriety, standardized, even conventional wisdom. Embodied forms of expertise are legitimated and reproduced: this is how you work with 16 mm film, this is how you get to the ocean, this is how my grandmother made jam. And historical modes of knowledge formation are situated alongside the phenomenological – the deep history of place (water rights, land development, racial geographies) informing the subjective experience of Los Angeles.

Nonprofit organizations – arts, educational, medical, environmental – have heroically worked to fill the gaps in the social fabric rendered by the decisive removal of public funding, an institutionalized ideology of radical individualism suddenly legitimized by narratives of financial scarcity. But nonprofits are constrained by grant cycles and the demand to demonstrate measurable results, harnessing committed political ideals for the purpose of producing work that will lead to the next round of funding. Unlike Critical Art Ensemble, who was able to answer the question "What does your art change?" with the simple reply, "We have no way to measure outcome,"[21] nonprofits often do not have the luxury of ironically deflecting institutional demands for impact and results. Without the institutional directive to adopt "best practices" and submit to instrumentalized means testing, grassroots and nonformalized collectives can be open to experimentation and play, whether in the form of an urban safari, jam-making, or visual iconography. Play can challenge normative codes and scripts and open up possibilities of alternative action without foreclosing on the vast potential latent within the system. It activates, sets into motion, unsettles the status quo. Alberto Melucci is canonical on this point: "[W]hat nourishes [collective action] is the daily production of alternative frameworks of sense, on which the networks themselves are founded and live from day to day."[22]

"Collective" here is to be understood not in terms of community as a singular and given entity, but rather in terms of mutable social relations that bring that community into being.[23] That is, community is enacted rather than captured or exploited in the process of collective action, a dynamic that is particularly meaningful in the context of economic markets that depend on the manufacturing and regulation of sociality. Jam sessions, urban safaris, mobile film screenings – all are activist activities, modes of resistance that no longer rely on "the gloomy dialectic between acquiescence and 'transgression,'"[24] but rather resituate social activity as a form of life. The momentary experiences they create have an immediacy with both a temporal and spatial dimension: it is about what happens in a particular place at a particular moment. The

21

Artnet Questionnaire, *Where Is Critical Art Ensemble?*, March 21, 2007, available online at: www.artnet.com/magazineus/features/quest/quest3-20-07.asp, accessed 06/13/2014.

22

Alberto Melucci, "Social Movements and the Democratization of Everyday Life," in: John Keane (ed.), *Civil Society and the State. New European Perspectives*, Verso, London, 1988, pp. 245–260, here p. 248.

23

See: Kester 2004, pp. 147–151.

24

Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude. For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life*, Semiotext(e), Los Angeles (CA), The MIT Press, Cambridge (MA), 2003, p. 70.

sociality is that of strangers linked by processes of exchange: the proximity and intimacy of collective participation that makes possible the transmission of empathetic affects.[25] As Franco "Bifo" Berardi counsels: "Building and sustaining solidarity [...] is about reactivating the sentience of the social body [...] re-activating empathy between living organisms. This empathy is the foundation of the solidarity we need today."[26] Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift similarly envision an "art of the political": "What is needed is active cultivation of alternative feelings so that new affective connections can be forged and a general desire for other ways of being in the world can emerge [...]."[27] The means by which these connections might be animated are "psycho-technologies that engineer collective feelings, but in a non-cynical way."[28] Supremely cynical techniques and technologies include social engineering, as in the benign liberalism of the choice architectures that nudge us to make better consumer decisions, and behavioral marketing, training in the guise of assessment. Pirate and hacktivist networks are perhaps differently cynical, mobilizing collective feeling with increasingly sophisticated public relations campaigns and cunning tactics of evasion and obfuscation.

We are led then to Anonymous, an idea of a collective, a situational politics of nonsovereignty, and a strict behavioral code for those who would claim affiliation: do not grandstand. The activist, Maurizio Lazzarato writes in a different context, "is not someone who becomes the brains of the movement, who sums up its force [...]."[29] Anonymous exemplifies the multiheaded hydra: "We are legion. Expect us."[30] This is the terrain of the coming insurrection, a community as yet unyoked to a particular formal structure. The bravado of the announcement that is at once threat and promise – "expect us" – perhaps stands in stark contrast to the quietness, even the modesty, of an authorized walk down the L.A. River or of jam-making. How are we to understand the relations between large-scale, high-impact events (the doxxing of a public figure or the impersonation of a corporate official, the rewriting of *The New York Times* or a DDoS attack on the same) and local, small-scale interventions that may not even register as such? Or between a large-scale futurist project such as Terreform ONE that reimagines whole ecosystems and a simple coastline map aspiring to the removal of a few signs and bits of shrubbery? Should we regard community gardens, mobile libraries, and urban safaris as an abdication if not a disavowal of significant political action? Are they just instances of boutique activism: self-fulfillment for a privileged few individuals rather than transformative for the species and planet? Are such art-activist practitioners to be dismissed as mere "humanitarian pragmatists," as BAVO anticipates, "focused on achieving 'small but real' improvements in people's lives, rather than offering fierce political resistance to the status quo"?[31]

My suggestion is that Fallen Fruit and the Los Angeles Urban Rangers, as some of many possible examples, challenge the expectation that we ought continually to be thinking in terms of impact and implications for large-scale systems. Fallen Fruit is interesting precisely because its practical borders are circumscribed: confined to a few city blocks, it directly addresses the

25 See: Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, Zone Books, New York (NY), 2002.

26 David Hugill and Elise Thorburn, "Reactivating the Social Body in Insurrectionary Times: A Dialogue with Franco 'Bifo' Berardi," in: *Berkeley Planning Journal*, vol. 25, 2012, pp. 210–220, here p. 213.

27 Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift, *Arts of the Political. New Openings for the Left*, Duke University Press, Durham (NC), London, 2013, p. 158.

28 Ibid.

29 Maurizio Lazzarato, *Les révolutions du capitalisme*, Les empêcheurs de penser on rond, Paris, 2004, as quoted from: Brian Holmes, "Swarmachine. Activist Media Tomorrow," July 21, 2007, available online at: https://brianholmes.wordpress.com/2007/07/21/swarmachine, accessed 06/13/2014.

30 Brian Knappenberger, *We Are Legion: The Story of the Hacktivists*, Luminant Media, Venice (CA), 2012.

31 BAVO, "Artists, One More Effort to be Really Political," in: Lieven De Cauter, Ruben De Roo, and Karel Vanhaesebrouck (eds.), *Art and Activism in the Age of Globalization*, NAi Publishers, Rotterdam, 2011, pp. 288–296, here p. 292.

needs of a local population rather than foregrounding questions of global food resources. It challenges the persistent expectation that activist practices must reach a certain threshold – bodies involved, page views, journalistic coverage – before they can be construed as meaningful, before they matter. Certainly in the making visible of different infrastructures, obscured elsewheres are brought within a participant's perceptual field. How after all do avocados make their way to grocery stores in arctic climates? What is the source of the industrial waste in the L.A. River? But the expectation that every art-activist activity necessarily reverberates globally is thwarted in the embrace of the quotidian, the everyday spaces people need to learn to negotiate, and modes of living that are more ordinary than spectacular.

In their pamphlet in the Critical Making series, Geert Lovink and Michael Dieter question whether "pure tinkering" should be celebrated as such or whether it necessarily needs to be "positioned within a clear socio-political agenda" lest it simply become "lifestyle choice."[32] They worry that without such a positioning, maker culture might simply be "reducible to a slow fabrication movement, or a kind of home science kit ala *MAKE Magazine*."[33] But if we are resolved to alter the terms of the biopolitical management of life itself and cultivate a new social imaginary, then the care of the self must be axiomatic, and "lifestyle" is precisely the terrain on which the battle against the status quo must be waged. Given the collapse of distinctions between life and work, art practices that involve the whole of life, that aspire to make a "small but real" difference, truly can be said to inhabit the space of contemporary revolution. It may well be the case, as Claire Bishop suggests, that artists are not always or necessarily suited to the task of "devising new models of social and political organization,"[34] but the effects of social practice need not be considered in such grandiose terms. We might instead rely on the more modest parameters of the here and now, on the production of collective feeling, and on the imagining and enacting of social relations that may be habitually rather than constitutively new.

32 Geert Lovink and Michael Dieter, "Theses on Making in the Digital Age," in: Garnet Hertz (ed.), *Critical Making*, 2012, n.p., available online at: http://conceptlab.com/criticalmaking/PDFs/CriticalMaking2012Hertz-Manifestos-pp15to20-Dieter Lovink-ThesesOnMaking.pdf, accessed 06/13/2014.

33 Ibid.

34 Bishop in: Thompson 2012, p. 45