

How to Radicalize a Mouse?

Notes on Radical Opportunism

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My name is Kuba Szreder. For fifteen years now, I have been working as an 'independent' curator. I am a projectarian. I am an opportunist. I am a mouse.

But even as a freelancer, required to constantly chase opportunities, I deliberately resist the same project-related modes of life and work that support my 'independence' in the first place. And I am convinced that there are many more 'independent' projectarians, who fundamentally dissent with project-related systems. Granted, projects support a sort of independency. On the other hand though, they turn contemporary cultural producers into project junkies, who constantly search for opportunities. Hence, my attempts to radicalize opportunism.

Obviously, I do not suggest to radicalize opportunism understood as a moral stance. Far from it, opportunism is considered here as a relation of production and a mode of existence of people whose livelihood depends on the skilful utilization of opportunities. This kind of opportunism is structurally imposed by networked capitalism. I argue here that we, as opportunists by default, face a political and ethical choice between cynical and radical utilization of opportunities. In contrast to cynical opportunists, who pursue their individual interests while submitting to neoliberal hegemony, a radical opportunist attempts to tactically politicize the project-related systems of production in accordance with such values as solidarity, equality and self-governance. Radical opportunism is a stance adopted by politically engaged projectarians, the radicalism of which is recalibrated by a pragmatic approach to their own dependency on the flow of opportunities.

Opportunism of a Mouse

In order to survive, freelancers (curators, academics, artists and the like) have to chase opportunities that provide access to temporary projects, jobs, or positions. Thus, the 'independent' projectariat is dependent on the flow of opportunities. In this respect, they are like other contemporary opportunists who roam the post-Fordistic networks, looking for temporary shelters, resources, assignments, for any chances to ensure their own survival. A projectarian resembles a mouse, because the constant search for opportunities is similar to that of an 'animal's blind ability to take advantage of every opportunity for salvation' (De Carolis, 1996, p. 41), to borrow the words of Massimo De Carolis, Italian scholar of post-Fordism. According to De Carolis, 'the dominant sentiment ... of

opportunism is none other *than fear*, the anxiety of an animal in flight' (De Carolis, 1996, p. 41, italics by author). In the general context of post-Fordism, this anxiety is prompted by the flexibility of the labour market, which jeopardizes the chances of survival of the individual, who is stripped bare of any other chances of sustenance than the ones provided by temporary opportunities.

Precisely in this sense, every projectarian is by default an opportunist. However, in saying this I deliberately dissociate the meaning of 'opportunism' from the commonsensical, negative connotations of the term. With Paulo Virno, we should understand 'opportunism' in a 'structural, sober, non-moralistic' manner, as a mode of existence prompted by the flexible labour arrangements of contemporary capitalism (Virno, 2004, pp. 86-87). Virno's use of the term 'opportunism' implies that the survival of an individual depends on the skilful utilization of opportunities. This situation derives from changes in the general labour organization in post-Fordism, resulting from the lack of stable working patterns and imposed precarity. As Virno states: 'The roots of opportunism lie in an outside-of-the-workplace socialization marked by unexpected turns, perceptible shocks, permanent innovation, chronic instability. Opportunists are those who confront a flow of ever-interchangeable possibilities, making themselves available to the greater number of these, yielding to the nearest one, and then quickly swerving from one to another' (Virno, 2004, p. 86).

The projectariat is opportunistic precisely because projectarians are required to chase and utilize 'a flow of ever-interchangeable possibilities.' In other words, if one is without any stable employment, just as 'independent' curators or artists are, one's survival depends on a skilful exploitation of opportunities – for employment, making projects, et cetera. To better understand the implications of this situation, it is interesting to remind ourselves of the origins of the term 'opportunism'. The Latin word 'opportunus', from which opportunism originates, denotes a favourable, advantageous wind that enables a sailor to reach a friendly harbour. Similarly, contemporary opportunists try to navigate on the adverse oceans of contemporary networks, anxiously looking for sparse havens created by temporary opportunities for employment.

I would argue that the artistic projectariat is rather like a tribe of anxious mice or a group of tired sailors than a cabal of 'optimistic joy riders', as Pascal Gielen decried freelancing curators. For a joy rider 'cynicism and opportunism have become necessary

modes of operation' (Gielen, 2009, p. 36), because he or she: '... enjoys the pleasures afforded by today's widespread neoliberal market economy, and seizes every opportunity to tell a critical, engaged or unique story. In other words, such a curator is always a big opportunist' (Gielen, 2009, pp. 36-37).

Well, there is no need to deny that when a mouse finds a granary or when a weary sailor anchors in a port, they do indulge in available spoils. However, the whole point is that such moments of respite are few, as the life of projectarians is mainly spent looking for always tenuous opportunities, a continuous fight for survival, filled with anxiety and fear. It is important to note that in the contemporary project jungle, there are always more projectarians than possibilities. Therefore, people need to compete in order to secure their subsistence: you either make projects or you perish. In this sense, the project world is a cruel economy, in which only a few win, while others are left with nothing but their own potential to enter into – always uncertain and temporary – projects.

Who is a Projectarian?

Projectarians are people who own nothing but their potential to enter into projects (or do have only their own projects). In this sense, they are both similar and distinct from proletarians, who are defined by their lack of property. Similarly to proletarians, who need to sell their labour in order to survive, projectarians are forced to chase temporary possibilities for employment, provided by projects or jobs structured as if they were projects (i.e. temporary and task-oriented assignments). On the other hand though, projectarians resemble micro-entrepreneurs (or to use Foucault's term – entrepreneurs of the self), because projects enable them to capitalize their innate capacities, social connections and experiences in exchange for monetary or reputational gains. They are owners of their own biopolitical means of production. What they lack and compete for is access to networks in which they are able to actualize their potentials in order to build their trajectories and ensure survival.

Such actualizations are made possible by projects. According to Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, authors of the seminal treatise *New Spirit of Capitalism*, the project is: '... a mass of active connections apt to create forms – that is to say, bring objects and subjects into existence – by stabilizing certain connections and making them irreversible. It is thus a temporary *pocket of accumulation*

which, creating value, provides a base for the requirement of extending the network by furthering connections' (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005, p. 105, italics by the authors).

Projects are temporary assemblies of agents, things and relations that are oriented on realizing a defined goal, after which they dissipate and dissolve in the network. Project-related modes of production are characteristic of post-Fordism, in which the dominant role is played by networks, flexible labour arrangements, accelerated mobility and temporariness of relations. Here, I am mainly interested in the artistic projects (festivals, exhibits, biennials, educational series, conferences, et cetera), but projects are everywhere. An ever growing number of professional assignments is organized in a project-like manner in all spheres of life (think about temporary jobs at academia or the popularity of project-related jobs in NGOs or in private sector outsourcing), swelling the numbers of the projectariat.

Projects are not just means of production, neutral infrastructure which could be utilized for achieving one's goals. Every project is a material, temporal and localized embodiment of social apparatuses that regulate and support the making of these projects. The apparatus is not a thing, a machine, an institution or an organization, which could be controlled by any individual, class or social movement. With Foucault, we should rather understand the apparatus as an ensemble of diverse components, such as subjects, things, practices, discourses, institutions, and resources (Foucault, 1980, p. 194). In other words, the apparatus is both a systemic codification of the social relations and a tangible materialization of this code in the social form of projects, subjectivities and networks. The project-related apparatuses configure relations between such heterogeneous elements as the discourses of individual freedom and flexibility, the organizational formats of project-based management, the grant systems as embodiments of cultural policies, the legal acts in which they are embedded, the applications as interfaces linking applicants and funders, the values and subjectivities of project-makers, et cetera.

Project-related forms of production share many similar traits with what Maurizio Lazzarato calls 'immaterial labour' (Lazzarato, 1996), which involves the bio-political, affective and emotional capacities of working subjects. 'Immaterial labour', according to Lazzarato, is an element of the wider political project, as it accentuates the hybrid nature of new forms of labour,

from which new political alliances and forms of collective intelligence could potentially emerge. Lazzarato does not suggest that 'immaterial labour' does not have a material component, i.e. that it is somehow 'spiritual' (Lazzarato in conversation with Bojana Cveji ; Cveji and Lazzarato, 2010, p. 12). He emphasizes that the concept of 'immaterial labour' points towards the differences between old forms of industrial work, which reduce workers to their manual capacities, and new forms of labour, which engage subjects cognitively and affectively. In a similar vein, Paulo Virno suggests that contemporary workers are similar to 'virtuosos', because of the systemic emphasis on workers' individual performance, public self-presentation, and their cognitive involvement in the execution of tasks (Virno, 2004, pp. 53-66). According to Virno, such 'virtuosity' is both a form of work, cooperation, politics and communication, the synthesis of which facilitates the emergence of what he calls a 'general intellect', a form of collective intelligence and political mobilization under post-Fordism (Virno, 2004, p. 66).

In short, projectarians are both 'makers', 'immaterial workers' and 'virtuosos' of projects. The practice of making projects involves a bundle of intertwined activities, such as looking for opportunities, connecting, proposing, applying, relating, assembling, reporting. But more fundamentally, the projectariat is defined by its intrinsic dependency on the flow of interchangeable opportunities. Projectarians are structural opportunists.

The Cause for Radical Opportunism

One might ask: why consider radicalization of project-imposed opportunism at all? Why bother? Why shouldn't 'independent' projectarians simply do something else, stop doing projects, withdraw from these apparatuses? There are several responses to these questions.

The first is that project-related forms of employment are so widespread that looking for a stable, well-paid and safe job is a dream of the past. Projectarians are just as opportunistic as any other post-Fordistic employee who is employed on the basis of temporary arrangements, even if they are not called projects.

The second answer would be more nuanced, by pointing out the fundamental ambivalences of project-related apparatuses and the role they play in sustaining the 'independent' production in the expanded field of art. 'Independent' and politically engaged projectarians are constantly faced with a basic dilemma. On the one hand, project-related structures of production facilitate

'independent' practice. On the other hand, projects impose the ideological and structural features of neoliberalism, which goes against our beliefs and ideals.

The third answer relates to the position adopted in the formation of an argument. As a politicized practitioner embedded in the structures that are criticized here, I am not only interested in issuing critical statements about the investigated processes (as a distant sociologist might be tempted to do), but consider the structural pressures that are analysed as practical challenges. In this sense, I am interested not only in the description (or condemnation) of a social phenomenon, but in the pragmatic approach to the identified problems. Consequently, I not only ask 'what is wrong?', but I am also genuinely interested in 'what is to be done?'

From such a position, I strongly advocate for critical engagement with project-related modes of production. I think, and will argue in detail later, that withdrawal from such apparatuses is neither feasible nor productive. I also do not agree with people who issue blanket judgements about the projectariat as a formation inherently tainted by cynical opportunism and inevitably subsumed by neoliberalism. I acknowledge that the project-related apparatuses currently operate in accord with the structural pressures of post-Fordism. Yet, on the other hand, every apparatus is a field of struggle, because wherever there is power, there is also resistance, quipping after Foucault. Apparatuses are incoherent ensembles, full of ruptures and rifts, that could be exploited in order to maintain temporary, yet feasible forms of collective autonomy. Precisely in this context, I argue for radical opportunism as a mode of resistance that tries to re-appropriate project-related structures, resources and opportunities in order to facilitate 'independent' cultural production in the expanded field of art, beyond the art market and art institutions. Such critical engagement does not result in the transformation of adverse conditions, but rather in constant negotiations between practical constraints and political ideals. Radical opportunism is a way of navigating (rather than resolving) those contradictions.

I discuss the attempts to radicalize opportunism from the particular position of an 'independent' curator involved in self-organized artistic initiatives and standalone curatorial projects. Such endeavours unfold in the context of an expanded field of artistic and curatorial practices, which, as Karen van der Berg and Ursula Pasero state, are only 'loosely connected to the gallery-exhibition

nexus' (Van der Berg, 2013, p. VII). The expanded field of practice is constituted by the plethora of what Stephen Wright and Basekamp (an art collective from USA) call 'plausible art worlds' (Plausible Artworlds, n.d.), a variety of artistic universes coexisting at the verge of the mainstream art world, organized around the core of metropolitan institutions, dominant galleries, global biennials and art fairs. This field consists of artistic and curatorial practices related to live art, public art, socially engaged art, activist-artistic initiatives, urban interventions, vernacular architecture, alternative education, participatory actions. These activities frequently constitute themselves as an alternative to both traditional art institutions and the commercial art market. Such activities are organized within various frameworks such as artist-run spaces, autonomous collectives, cooperatives and small enterprises, artistic and curatorial commissions, public grants.

In this field, projects play an important role in sustaining 'independent' production. Importantly, we should not conflate projects and grants, as the latter are already bureaucratically formalized manifestations of project-related apparatuses. Projects are and can be much more universal, as they provide convenient organizational forms for sustaining ephemeral and temporary endeavours, enabling people coming from a variety of backgrounds to assemble and efficiently pursue their goals. Use of the term 'projects' to describe artistic and curatorial practices dates back to the 1970s, when the project-related artistic forms emerged to take a dominant position in the expanded field of art. According to Van den Berg, in this period the development of artistic projects began to be considered as an alternative to the typical, object-oriented and studio-based artistic practice, facilitating the expansion of the field of art beyond the 'gallery-exhibition nexus' (Van der Berg, 2013, pp. 66-69).

We could find the precursors of the project-related modes of production in the numerous historical instances of artistic self-organization and experimentation beyond the confines of the 'gallery-exhibition nexus'. Even without extensive research, we could immediately name many historical examples, such as: the new genre of public art and projects of Mary Jane Jacobs and Suzanne Lacy in the 1990s (cf. Jacobs, 1995; Lacy, 1995); early examples of interdisciplinary artistic projects such as *If you lived here* by Martha Rosler (cf. Rosler, 1991); the tradition of artistic selforganization and artist-run spaces from the 1960s onwards

(cf. Ault, 2002); numerous historical examples of artistic collaborations (cf. Block et al., 2005); the artistic expansion of the medium of exhibition by Fluxus or collectives such as General Idea or Group Material (cf. O'Neill, 2012, pp. 105-10; Richter, 2012). Boris Groys has these kinds of artistic legacy in mind when he proclaims the 'loneliness of the project': 'Each project is above all the declaration of another, new future that is supposed to come about once the project has been executed. But in order to induce such a new future one first has to take a period of leave or absence for oneself, with which the project has transferred its agent into a parallel state of heterogeneous time' (Groys, 2008, p. 3).

Groys locates the 'loneliness of the project' in relation to the specific form of temporality characteristic of the aesthetical or political avant-garde. Groys defines projects as collective or individual undertakings, the main aim of which is to envision and change the social or aesthetical order (Groys, 2008, p. 2). When Groys speaks about projects, he clearly does not define them in the context of management. On the contrary, he critically mentions project-related systems of financing cultural production as bureaucratic formalizations of avant-gardist undertakings that defile the fundamental premises of daring aesthetical or political projects (Groys, 2008, p. 1). When we consider the potential radicalization of project-related apparatuses, we should keep in mind this basic friction between projects understood as radical projections in time and projects understood as managerial formats that regulate temporal regimes. Radical opportunists inhabit this contradiction in order to revive the utopian potential of project-related formats, while defying bureaucratic conventions of project-based management.

Neoliberal Articulations of Project-related Apparatuses

Regarding the conditions of production prevailing in the expanded field of art, we need to consider several issues at stake. First, independency from institutions does not imply autonomy from neoliberalism. Second, project-related apparatuses influence social forms as much as contents of artistic projects, subjectivities of projectarians, and their value systems. Third, the project-related apparatuses subsume practitioners in the neoliberal hegemony by the use of competitive systems of incentives rather than by disciplinary coercion. Last but not least, the 'independent' projectariat is determined by its fundamental dependency on the flow of

interchangeable opportunities to comply with the structural pressures of post-Fordism. These relations of forces manifest themselves in the several aspects of artistic and curatorial practice. We could explain the connection between project-related apparatuses and post-Fordism by yet another reference to Foucault. According to him, although apparatuses do not constitute a coherent form of social organization, every apparatus is defined by its 'dominant strategic function' (Foucault, 1980, p. 196). In this respect, any apparatus is 'a rational and concrete intervention in the relations of forces, either so as to develop them in a particular direction, or to block them, to stabilize them, and to utilize them' (Foucault, 1980, p. 196). The social apparatuses are in themselves productive, they produce and reproduce social relations and subjectivities. According to Foucault, power relations do not only discipline or prohibit, they rather have a 'directly productive role, wherever they come into play' (Foucault, 1990, p. 94). Power relations prompt the emergence of social forms, while subduing them in the 'interplay of non-egalitarian and mobile relations' (Foucault, 1990, p. 94). Power traverses through different social relations, fluctuating in time, shaping social forms and moulding the links between people and things in a manner specific to a particular discourse or power formation.

The project-related apparatuses expose projectarians to the relations of power. They mould modes of feeling, thinking, living and working innate to the projectariat in accord with neoliberal hegemony. The first of such process is how neoliberalism shapes desires for independence and autonomy, innate to flexible labour regimes, in the form of possessive, competitive and cynical individualism. Second are quantifications characteristic of an audit culture imposed by grant systems on independent initiatives in order to suspend their autonomy. Third is the neoliberal enforcement of competition as the general rule regulating access to opportunities and resources, which turns society into a neo-Darwinistic jungle. Fourth is the ruptured temporality of project-related production, which imposes on practitioners the need to constantly organize one project after another. Fifth are systems of diffused yet prevalent control, which make projectarians control themselves and control each other, so that they comply with the conditions of project-related production without being exposed to direct discipline. There are several other examples of this structural convergence between project-related apparatuses and

neoliberalism, resulting in the proliferation of self-imposed precarity and depression, the emergence of winner-takes-all competitive economies, and the threat of exclusion that links lack of visibility with experience of injustice.

However, this kind of structural junction does not constitute an enclosed, totalitarian system that would prevent the emergence of any form of dissent. On the contrary, project-related apparatuses are constituted on frictions and instabilities, which can but do not have to be articulated in accord with the hegemonic programme of neoliberalism. There is always a possibility to resist, and to articulate these frictions in accordance with different ideals and values.

The Cause is Not Entirely Lost – Contradictions, Ambivalences and Inconsistencies of the Project-related Apparatuses

There are two fundamental ambivalences – of post-Fordism and of the project-related orders of worth – that partially disrupt the neoliberal hegemony, creating the ruptures to be inhabited by radical opportunism. However, paradoxically, these fundamental contradictions are at the same time legitimizing project-related modes of production, as the sources of their lasting allure. It is not neoliberal capitalism that makes 'independent' projectarians do their projects, but rather promises of freedom, autonomy, self-realization and creativity, which neoliberalism is able to mould according to its own premises. These fundamental ambivalences have a remarkable impact on projectarians who experience them as professional and existential contradictions. On the one hand, project-related apparatuses cater to the desires of independent, autonomous and creative life, facilitating a sort of 'independence' for projectarians by providing them with resources and organizational structures. On the other hand, the same apparatuses indirectly impose on practitioners exploitative and alienating systems of networked management, characteristic of post-Fordism. The programme of radical opportunism thrives on these tensions and is a tactical attempt at their progressive articulation.

Radical opportunism refers to Virno's insights into the 'neutral core' of post-Fordism. According to him, the internal contradictions of post-Fordism unfold in 'the most diverse contexts of experience (work, leisure, feelings, politics, etc.)' (Virno, 2004, p. 84). Virno states that: '... it is necessary to rise up from these "bad sentiments" [i.e. opportunism and cynicism – my addition] to the

neutral core, namely to the fundamental mode of being, which, in principle, could give rise even to developments very different from those prevailing today. What is difficult to understand is that the antidote, so to speak, can be tracked down only in what for the moment appears to be poison' (Virno, 2004, p. 84).

Virno emphasizes that 'we can hypothesize that every conflict or protest [in post-Fordism – my addition] will take root in the ... "neutral core" which, for the moment, manifests itself in these rather repugnant forms [i.e. of opportunism and cynicism – my addition]' (Virno, 2004, p. 84). When Virno discusses the 'neutral core', he speaks of forms of social practice prompted by post-Fordist modes of production. He means that social mobility, disruption of norms, intellectualization of labour, and enhancements in social communication can prompt new forms of either capitalistic exploitation or social emancipation. When these conditions are articulated in accord with capitalism, post-Fordism brings on 'bad sentiments' of opportunism, cynicism, fear and anxiety. When utilized by progressive social formations, the same conditions of production facilitate modes of collective autonomy, direct democracy and self-governance, which unfold beyond the confines of capitalistic enterprises, institutions of state or the traditional public sphere. Precisely in this respect I follow up Virno's remarks by trying to look for the 'neutral core' of project-related apparatuses, which could prompt the emergence of situated yet tangible forms of equalitarian self-organization of projectarians.

Even when we think about project-related social technologies in detail, we need to acknowledge that they do not only support the management of small project teams, but also propose a kind of moral order. This double (managerial and moral) function of projects in networked capitalism has been accurately described by Boltanski and Chiapello in their already quoted treatise on 'new spirit of capitalism', which materialized after the 1970s. Examining new management literature from the 1980s and 1990s, they trace the emergence of what they call the 'projective city'. Every city, as a 'moral spirit of capitalism', is a system of justification that validates systemic arrangements by constraining the otherwise disruptive excesses of capitalism (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005, pp. 24-27). Orders of worth stabilize the social field by providing vision of common good, determining value systems and ways of doing things that are justifiable, i.e. commonly accepted as valid, impartial, credible and socially beneficial.

The projective city is a response to the evolution of the new, flexible modes of capitalistic production operating in the globalized and networked world. According to Boltanski and Chiapello, projects implement a form of order within the network, without which a purely networked society 'would simply contain flows, where nothing could be stabilized, accumulated or crystallized' (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005, p. 105). The connexionist world, as Boltanski and Chiapello emphasize, encompasses numerous negative consequences such as lack of safety and material stability. In order to legitimize these drawbacks, the projective order of worth incorporates promises of individual freedom, flexibility, novelty, authenticity and creativity (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005, p. 97). Boltanski and Chiapello trace the sources of this incorporation (and thus of the moral power of the projective city), by pointing towards the co-optation by networked capitalism of what they call the artistic critique of capitalism. This mode of critique had already been formulated by the late 19th century, targeting such features of industrial capitalism as boredom, alienation and discipline, by alluding to bohemian principles such as authenticity, individual freedom and creative expression (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005, p. 38). According to Boltanski and Chiapello, precisely this set of values informed the counterculture of the late 1960s and early 1970s, to the demands of which new management responded in the 1980s and 1990s. Importantly, the process of co-optation partially changed the very capitalism that incorporated critique, because social systems specific to networked capitalism have to cater to the demands for a more enticing, creative and mobile life, in order to retain their legitimacy. On the other hand, as a result of this co-optation capitalism as such was not overcome, but rather exploitation and alienation were reinstated in the forms specific to a networked society. Still, this formation is characterized by a continuous tension between the enticed desires and the systemic incapacity to satisfy them, creating a rupture in which a radical opportunist might dwell.

What is Radical Opportunism?

The notion of radical opportunism purposefully juxtaposes two seemingly contradictory notions of 'radicalism' and 'opportunism', destabilizing the moral implications of both. Obviously, according to a commonsensical meaning of the terms, radical opportunism is a nonsensical contradiction. Opportunism is a morally

compromised stance. Radicalism suggests lack of moral compromise. However, I discuss the radicalization of opportunism understood not as a moral stance but as a mode of production. It does not evacuate the ethical and political ambiguities inherent in the condition of the radicalized sectors of the projectariat, still it considers these contradictions as productive tensions and practical challenges. Radical opportunists are opportunists because they depend on the skilful utilization of opportunities, the access to which demands at least conditional complicity with the structural pressures of neoliberalism. Radical opportunists are radicals, because they address the roots, the structural causes of problems inherent in the project-related forms of life and work. The term 'radical opportunism' does not suggest an easy reconciliation between these two stances, but rather a continuous friction between pragmatic concerns and political principles, between short-term individualism and communal sustenance, between interdependency and interdependency.

The term deliberately incorporates an internal contradiction between an implicit conformity of opportunism and the criticality of radicalism in order to facilitate my dissent with two oppositional stances on contemporary forms of project-making. On the one hand, I dissent with the widespread forms of cynical opportunism, and propose practices that challenge rather than conform to the structural pressures of the project-related apparatuses. On the other hand, I disagree with blanket condemnations of projectarians as inherently cynical entrepreneurs of the self. By proposing the term 'radical opportunism' I contend that it is possible to utilize opportunities in a radicalized manner, even though such a stance is constituted on an internal tension between political motivations and the individual dependence on the flow of opportunities.

Radical Opportunism as a Protest Against Cynicism

As a radical opportunist I contend that the fundamental dependency on opportunities can be articulated in a manner other than the cynical, possessive and competitive individualism of opportunistic 'joy riders', who dominate in some sectors of the global art world. A radical opportunist utilizes opportunities in order to instigate, limited in scale yet tangible, iterations of egalitarian self-organization in the expanded field of art. Cynical opportunists, in contrast, utilize opportunities only for their own gain. Radical opportunism is inherently anti-cynical, because for radical opportunists the

recognition of systemic problems motivates a politicized dissent with those identified pressures, even if such resistance may hamper individual chances of securing opportunities (and thus for individual survival). In contrast to radical opportunists, cynics, according to Virno: 'From the outset ... renounce any search for an inter-subjective foundation for their praxis, as well as any claim to a standard of judgement which shares the nature of a moral evaluation. The fall of the principle of equivalency ... can be seen in the behavior of the cynic, in the impatient abandonment of the appeal for equality. Cynics reach the point where they entrust their self-affirmation precisely to the multiplication (and fluidification) of hierarchies and inequalities which the unexpected centrality of production knowledge seems to entail' (Virno, 2004, p. 86, italics by author).

A cynic experiences rules as social conventions, which has several implications as to how a cynic approaches 'social games'. Just as Virno states: '... one is no longer immersed in a predefined 'game,' participating therein with true allegiance. Instead, one catches a glimpse of oneself in individual 'games' which are destitute of all seriousness and obviousness, having become nothing more than a place for immediate *self-affirmation*' (Virno, 2004, p. 87).

As the ideology of individual interest is deeply embedded in the neoliberal hegemony, the activities of the cynical opportunist affirm and reproduce this form of social order. Radical opportunism is anti-cynical, because it defies the primacy of individual interest by trying to realize in practice 'appeals for equality', takes into account the interdependency of the individuals and collectives involved, and aims to act for the common rather than individual benefit. In this sense, radical opportunism is not driven by cost-benefit calculations, but rather by political beliefs and ethical values. Still, a radical opportunist is a pragmatist, who does not refute all opportunities whatsoever nor condemn project-related form of social order as inherently corrupted.

Radical Opportunism as Intervention into the Apparatuses

Importantly, cynical opportunists may have radical claims, i.e. their projects may disseminate critical content. However, for cynical opportunists, a radical claim is utilized as one of the means by which access to opportunities may be secured. By contrast, radical opportunists identify the apparatus as a site for political intervention, utilizing opportunities in accordance with their

political beliefs, even if confrontation with practical constraints results in the deflation of radical claims. In this sense, paradoxically, radical opportunism might be less radical in claims, but more politicized in practice.

Precisely in this respect, I align the programme of radical opportunism with Pascal Gielen's critique of 'catalogue activism' (Gielen, 2010, p. 19). Gielen emphasizes the lack of reflectivity characteristic of some contemporary star curators, who curate projects thematically critical of global capitalism, while organizing those projects in a way complicit with neoliberalism (Gielen, 2010, p. 14). He contextualizes the divergence between (neoliberal) social form and (declaratively progressive) content of curatorial activities in project-related modes of production. Gielen criticizes 'catalogue activism' because 'independent' curators fail, or are unwilling to critically address their own position of opportunistic project developers (Gielen, 2010, p. 19).

It is important to note that project-related modes of production may support critical contents, as long as people disseminating them conform to the basic principles of networked capitalism. As Boltanski and Chiapello suggest, project-based organizational systems 'can win over forces hostile to capitalism by proposing a grammar that transcends it' (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005, p. 111). They point out that 'anything can attain the status of a project, including ventures hostile to capitalism', creating a situation in which 'capitalism and anti-capitalist critique alike are masked' (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005, p. 111). Precisely in light of this systemic subversion, it is possible to identify the fundamental difference between radical and cynical opportunism. Radical opportunism differs from 'catalogue activism' because it approaches the apparatuses differently – instead of conforming to the apparatuses, it considers them as the sites for politicized intervention.

This conceptualization is similar to Walter Benjamin's understanding of the difference between authorial technique and tendency, put forth in his seminal essay *The Author as Producer* (1934). The central aim of Benjamin is to radicalize authors as producers, by defining the apparatus of literary production as a site of political intervention, scrutinizing the position of authors inside the relationships of production of a period (Benjamin, 1970, p. 2). For the sake of his argument, Benjamin differentiates between authorial 'tendency' and 'technique' (Benjamin, 1970,

p. 2). According to Benjamin, the authors who represent the correct political tendency and use the unchallenged apparatus to disseminate politically engaged contents, merely reproduce the current form of class relations (Benjamin, 1970, p. 8). The authorial technique, by contrast, aims at revolutionizing the apparatus in solidarity with the political struggle of the proletariat (Benjamin, 1970, p. 8). I would propose to frame the opposition between radical and cynical forms of opportunism in accord with Benjamin's analysis. The difference between cynical and radical opportunism (or authorial technique and authorial tendency) does not derive from political declarations or the intentions of an 'independent' projectarian (or an author). This divergence is defined by taking into account whether and how a projectarian (or an author) practically challenges the structural embedment of the apparatus in the criticized relations of production (in our case, of neoliberalism). In this sense, the opposition between a radical and a mere opportunist derives from their differing responses to the project-related apparatuses. Radical opportunism resists the 'organisational grammar' of projects, while mere opportunism is a form of complicity with the structural pressures, an approach dictated by the calculations of individual interest.

Radical Opportunism as Tactical Pragmatism

However, radical opportunists do not operate in the grand political scheme of proletarian upheaval, for which Benjamin hoped, unfortunately in vain. A radical opportunist is radically pragmatic, in a way similar to what Stephen Wright describes as the radical pragmatism of the political category of 'usership': 'Users take on those instances of power closest to them. And in addition to this proximity, or because of it, they do not envisage that the solution to their problem could lie in any sort of future to which the present might or ought to be subordinated (very different in this respect to any revolutionary horizon). They have neither the time to be revolutionary – because things have to change – nor the patience to be reformists, because things have to stop. Such is the *radical pragmatism of usership*'. (Wright, 2013, p. 27, italics by author).

Obviously, I write here from a slightly different perspective than Wright, as he emphasizes the political potential of use, while I discuss ways of radicalizing project-related processes of production. However, I align radical opportunism with Wright's

understanding of radical pragmatism, because radical opportunism, similar to usership, is neither reformist nor revolutionary, but rather adopts a hands-on approach to the problems identified and confronts them in practice. A radical opportunist, dependent on the flow of opportunities, responds to the structural pressures manifested in the process without making strategic plans for social reforms or revolutionary undertakings.

In this sense, radical opportunism is a tactic rather than a strategy, the difference between the two was outlined by Michel de Certeau. According to de Certeau, tactics differ from strategies to the extent that 'strategies are able to produce, tabulate, and impose ... whereas tactics can only use, manipulate, and divert' (Certeau, 1984, p. 30). Strategies set a stage of action, while tactics react to given circumstances. Correspondingly, I assume that the apparatuses are strategic (as they codify fields of action), while radical opportunism is tactical (as it responds to the particular codifications). In this sense, unless radical opportunists organize themselves in a political force, they are not able to supersede the structural causes of the pressures to which they respond.

Radical Opportunism as Non-dialectical Resistance (Neither Negating nor Reforming the Apparatuses)

Radical opportunism is neither revolutionary nor reformist, but rather radically pragmatic. In this sense, radical opportunists do not rely on the historical dialectic, so fundamental to Benjamin's argument. Radical opportunism, contrary to the notion of authorial technique, is contingent and situated in the given circumstances, rather than universalized and mediated by political movements. Consequently, the term emphasizes politicized responses to the apparatus over its revolutionary supersession.

My approach is similar to what Gerald Raunig names as non-dialectical resistance. Raunig establishes his notion in order to dispute what he understands to be the two poles of institutional critique. He debates with representatives of institutional critique, such as Andrea Fraser, who, in Raunig's opinion, invokes the image of inescapable confinement inside artistic institutions (Fraser, 2006). On the other hand, Raunig enters into polemics with intellectuals such as Isabelle Graw, who proposes recursion towards individual artistic practice as the sanctuary against the systemic pressures of late capitalism (Graw, 2006).

His aim is to denote a 'non-dialectical way out of purely negating and affirming the institution' (Raunig, 2009b, p. 174). Emphasizing the partial and punctuated character of dissent, Raunig refers to Foucault's understanding of critique. According to Foucault, a critique does not ask 'how not to be governed at all', but rather poses the question: 'how not be governed like that, by that, in the name of those principles, with such and such an objective in mind and by means of such procedures, not like that, not for that, not by them'(Foucault, 1997, p. 28).

Raunig utilizes the formula of 'not being governed like that' to avoid a polarization between a romantic phantasm of the 'absolute outside' of power relations and complicity with the current systemic arrangements (Raunig, 2009b, pp. 173-174). Similar to non-dialectical resistance, radical opportunism neither affirms nor negates the apparatus, critically engaging the particular 'procedures', 'objectives' and 'means' of the apparatus.

Radical Opportunism as Engagement

Radical opportunism, in its practical insistence on engagement with the criticized processes, differs from such formulations of post-Fordist dissent as a political strategy of exodus, for which Virno opts. For Virno, the progressive activation of the 'neutral core' of contemporary 'modes of being' should lead to what he calls 'defection' or 'exodus', defining these terms in the context of progressive political movements from the 1960s and 1970s (Virno, 1996, p. 32). Virno discusses the case of industrial workers in 19th-century North America as the example of defection and exodus. In order to escape from poor labour conditions, they moved away from industrial centres and became farmers, thus changing the situation in the labour market to the advantage of the labour class. The manner of such an exit is not escapism, as exodus has indirect political consequences and is pro-active (exodus is a movement to some other place in order to settle there). On the other hand, exodus is a different kind of politics from that of trade unionism or political parties, as it withdraws from the system that is criticized instead of engaging with it. For Virno such exodus is: '... the polar opposite of the desperate cry "there is nothing to lose but one's own chains": on the contrary, exit hinges on a latent kind of wealth, on an exuberance of possibilities ... Defection allows for a dramatic, autonomous, and affirmative expression of this surplus; and in this way it impedes the

“transfer” of this surplus into the power of state administration, impedes its configuration as productive resource of the capitalistic enterprise’ (Virno, 2004, p. 70).

For Virno, exodus leads to a productive realization of a social surplus, constituting alternatives while avoiding recuperation by the hostile forces of the state or the capitalistic economy. As the concept of exodus implies withdrawal (even if presumably productive), radical opportunism prioritizes engagement over exit, while acknowledging the complexities and contingencies of such a position. This decision to engage rather than withdraw is informed by the specific traits of project-related apparatuses. Even though Virno refers to social and economic conditions of post-Fordism, it seems that the notion of exodus does not fully account for the complexities of networked modes of production. It would be very hard to define what defecting from a network entails as, per definition, the network does not have any boundaries and is characterized by constant expansion. If exodus is understood as an attempt to leave existing networks, it might lead to self-exclusion, which in the context of contemporary networks correlates with injustice, lack of visibility and denial of access. Precisely in response to these risks, radical opportunists critically engage with project-related apparatuses in order to constitute systems of collective solidarity that combat exclusion. If, on the other hand, exodus is defined as an attempt to prompt autonomous clusters in the existing networks, it by default needs to engage with, rather than defect from, the ‘organizational grammar’ of a project. In this case, exodus becomes a form of critical engagement comparable with the programme of radical opportunism.

Conclusion: From Independency to Interdependency.

In terms of its practical application by ‘independent’ cultural producers, radical opportunism resists first and foremost the dependency of projectarians on the flow of interchangeable opportunities. This resistance implies the collective refusal of a cynical pursuit of opportunities at any cost. Just as the fundamental dependency of the projectariat manifests itself as temporal ruptures, project-related control or possessive individualism, radical opportunism takes different forms in various areas of application. Radical opportunism manifests itself as contemporary forms of strike that mould project-related temporalities in accordance with the collective desires of projectarians. Radical opportunism is an

impulse at a collective self-organization, from which various alternative institutional forms emerge (such as mock institutions, institutions of exodus, monster institutions, et cetera). Such collective forms constitute bulwarks against precarization, trying to balance project-related economies in favour of the projectarians involved.

The most important expression of the principles of radical opportunism is the transition from individualistic ‘independency’ to collective *interdependency* of projectarians. This interdependency is understood here as a regulative ideal and a system of valorization that accounts for the cooperative foundation of all project-related forms of activity, facilitates cooperative ties between projectarians, fosters their solidarity, contributes to the commonwealth instead of catering to individual interests, and actively struggles against egoistic self-affirmations (such as free-riding, careerism, et cetera).

By underscoring the significance of interdependency as a regulative ideal of radical opportunism, I conduct two operations. Firstly, I expose and criticize the intrinsic link between independency, neoliberalism, exploitation and exclusion. Secondly, I emphasize the importance of recognizing and fostering the collective foundations of personal autonomy. In this way, I acknowledge the criticism of project-related independency while framing it discursively as a practical challenge rather than as a structural inevitability. Curatorial and artistic practices, when informed by principles of radical opportunism, recognize and act upon the communal interdependency of practitioners involved in projects, processes and networks. Instead of competing for individual access to the flow of interchangeable opportunities, interdependent projectarians utilize project-related apparatuses to foster temporary yet tangible collectives, clusters and networks based on principles of solidarity and equality. By facilitating cooperative ties and maintaining interpersonal trust, interdependent projectarians challenge the mechanisms of systemic exclusion and contribute to establishing shared spaces, where potentially excluded producers can socialize. In such micro-public spheres, those who are at risk of exclusion can communicate with each other, formulate critique of the current systems of production and forge ties of collective solidarity. Such communities of interdependent practitioners are able to formulate strategic programmes of social transformation and potentially self-organize into a political force, which in the future can potentially target neoliberalism as a structural cause of precarity, inequality and exclusion.

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