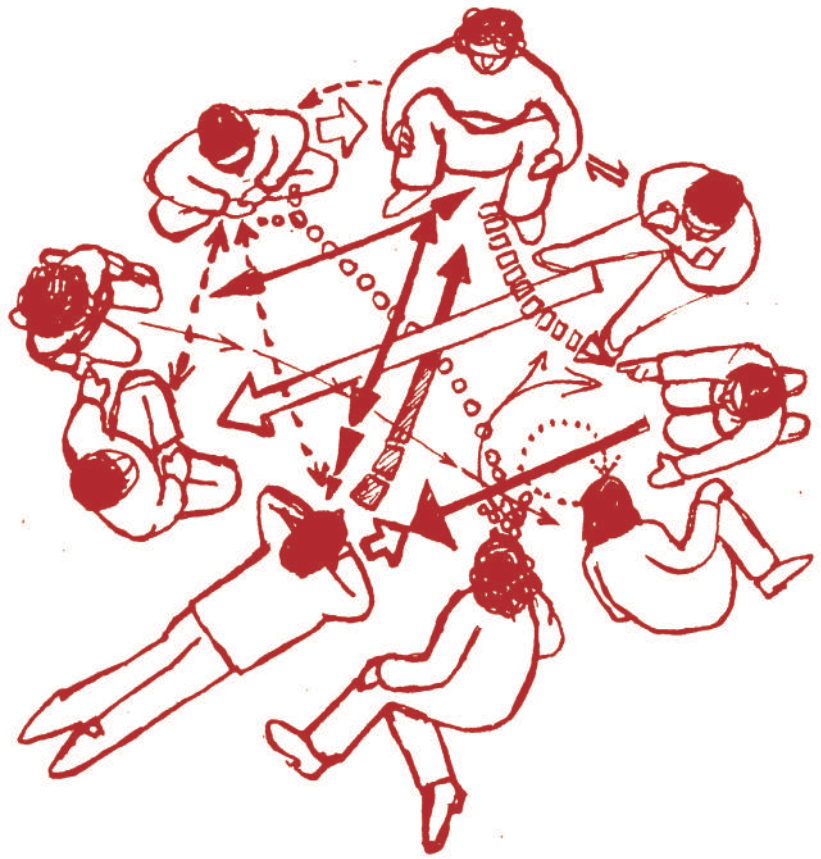




GROUP DYNAMITE

the baby, the bathwater,
and self-organised groups today

by A & BB, 2026, Berlin
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Introduction: Why can't we all just get along?

We come together over a shared concern: the im/possibility of being together. Beyond this concern, there is a desire and there is an urgency: to keep thinking of new ways to resist the ferocity of the present—the violence and the war of all against all—and find ways to stay together when everything tends to pull us apart. We, the writers, A and BB, have experienced that pleasure and that desire: the joy of collective creation. It is that quest which drives us. This exercise is an invitation to reflect on and practice forms of collectivity and to avoid falling into the traps set by those who insist it is impossible. There is also a certain need to process the traumas of the present in order to continue engaging in political life, despite the harm.

We also want to make this clear: this is a tool, but no text and no workshop can replace actual practice. We hope this document will accompany your search for moments of collective affirmation and emancipation; in short, it is an invitation to organize and act together, because only by standing with others can we confront the risks outlined here.

Yes, this is our humble attempt to refuse to throw the baby out with the bathwater, to instead put a rubber ring around the belly of the fraught political project of remaining attached. It's a cliché at this point to say that questions of how groups form, relate, negotiate, repair, succeed or fail and so on is not something that sits outside of politics, beyond strategy. Deleuze and Guattari wrote about micro-politics as the instruments that produce the (often arrhythmic) clanging tonality of collective life, all that which does not fit into traditional paradigms of action. What these relational questions are not, and cannot become, however, is the sum total of what any group should concern itself with. Where I come from that is called disappearing up one's own arse.

So, Group Dynamite, or, What is the Structure of Feeling of a political group in 2026? My fellow Welsh vibes-man Raymond Williams developed this concept to try to capture the shape of a collective emotional experience of change as it begins to emerge. Instead of a simple survey of our tendencies and their consequences, or a set of instructions for How to Group (don't ask me!) A and I have tried to hold hands under the Hood of Group

to better grasp at both theory and tradition, if nothing else to de-naturalise some of our worst tendencies in this moment of low militancy, high repression and perhaps unprecedented alienation.

It feels for us existential to start to identify and then nourish a new set of norms for how we group, how we conflict, how we negotiate, so we might better protect even the most imperfect attempts made on infertile grounds. If we have any chance of building the type of shared power with a sufficient and sustained enough energetic charge to light up the black skies overhead, then we must commit to each other with a renewed discipline. The stakes could not be higher for believing, despite the grief and the exhaustion, and with hope against hope, in the potential of any and all germinating counterinstitutions we might manage to assemble, however presently Bambi-legged and vulnerable. This means we find a way to stop frantically and zealously removing the fresh bricks they're made up of (which is to say, us) in order to hurl them at one another, in the recognition that each of us is a mirror and a window.

What follows is a combination of lightly edited transcripts of three conversations totalling seven hours of speaking together, interspersed with some of our own texts, co-written segments and individual subjective reflections on our experiences. At points it will be obvious where A's words and ideas end and BB's begin, at other times less so. We trust you. And we made you a map. We spent time in the archives in London and Berlin, digging for movement foremothers' wisdom to the hellish joys of doing political, emotional and social lifework amongst the comrades. You will find cartoons and images from that process reproduced here alongside some gems from our personal archives.



Building truth, a negotiation

Our context is the cumulative result of 50 years of neoliberalism. Mind and bodies modulated for self-promotion, a lack of empathy (or; incapacity to read the signs of others), a poverty in collective culture, and an assumption of precarity and lack of rights as “normal”. Under these conditions, work with others becomes more than a challenge. The Zapatistas said more than thirty years ago: “All for all, Nothing for us.” Can we remove the self from the centre, move from 'I' to 'we.' How do we start thinking from the 'We' again?

We inherited from the revolution of the 1970s feminist movement an amazing quantity of reflections, criticism, tools and concepts, which through the years have begun to shift context and meaning, to the extent of turning into caricatures of their origin. We believe these to be countereffective for the project of collective liberation. Going back to these sources allows us not to throw the baby out with the bathwater. What do we mean? Our context of enunciation refuses any assumed or pre-established category or definition. Instead, a genealogy of practices is required to understand the changes and remains. A culture of memory is required

Have you ever been accused of not being enough of a good feminist for not unconditionally supporting someone on their perspective about a conflict they are going through that you don't totally agree with? Responding without pre-emptive commitment to a position becomes offense, aggression, outrage. Curiosity becomes outlawed.

One root of that is the theory of Standpoint epistemology, first popularised by American feminist philosophers Nancy Hartsock and Sandra Harding in 1983 begins with the proposition that where we stand shapes what we can see, that knowledge is socially produced and necessarily always partial and not finite. The German word: *Deutungshoheit*, which resists exact translation, can be understood as the power to ascribe meaning to an experience, interpretative sovereignty even. In this frame, which has become dominant in social movement spaces, any given disagreement concerns not only the incident itself but also who possesses the power to interpret it, the authority to say 'this is what happened.' This, deployed at its extreme, creates a profound alienation in group relation, setting up the space between self and differentiated others as an unnavigable gulf. But what if Solidarity is the difference between you and I, something nascent in the space between us and our necessarily partial experience of this cruel world? How

far are we willing to walk out into the void, the clearing, towards each other?

I may not feel the bite cool wind that chills you, but I can notice your goose pimples, I can lend you my jacket, struggle alongside you to get you one, commit to warmth for all. When identity is the only way we analyse and judge disputes, we become stultified, caught in a strange overstatement of material power fantasy that we personally produce those freezing conditions. This approach also starts to self-circuit and produce smoke when positions of 'big system' marginality do not replicate in the 'little system' of the group. It cannot contend with the possibility of a bully who has a 'marginalised' identity, a victim of abuse who is also a man. At its most ridiculous and dehumanising, the marginalised subject is understood as being in possession of an almost cosmic wisdom about reality which cannot be interrogated, and is thus emptied of their own political subjectivity.

Big System, Little System

The Big System has big names that usually end with an -ism or a -phobia. Capitalism. Patriarchy. White supremacy. Ableism. Transphobia. The Little System has a name too: the room, the friendship, the collective. the meeting. The writer on groups Lily Scherlis has called it the swamp we're standing in: a dense sometimes acrid mud of ordinary relationships, loyalties, fears and compromises. When we rush to point accusingly to the big system to analyse our issue in the little system, small people become a stand-in for giant structures. If every little conflict becomes understood only as another symptom of Big System, we find ourselves locked into fatalism, diagnosis and locked out of negotiation. That the systemic is always in the room in some form is a broad truism worth holding onto, but the room is not the whole system.

We have a lot more power to shape new weird, cool oppositional ecologies, different ways of relating when we let ourselves be more than purely the contingent labels which make up our identities.

I could say more too about the inherent pessimism of seeing ourselves primarily as vectors for Big System. When who you are becomes a limiting stain you cannot wash off, political action that leads with your inherent dignity is foreclosed in favour of shame.

BB: I have seen groups become suffocated through this inability to allow for and address the reality of personal subjectivity. "Well, this is what this person said they felt or experienced, therefore that's the objective and only truth." That's how I learnt the word *Deutungshoheit*. The system confusion piece I see so, so much in my work facilitating groups, and being in them where people immediately resort to diagnosing race/sex/ableism etc in their group. There is this comfort in zooming out to avoid analysing something that's usually also got origins in something a bit more interpersonal, cloudy, specific. For me that relates to another idea of Available Enemies: how we create them for convenience, and take the anger that brought us together to challenge something systemic, and instead turn it inwards. That happens most when there's a lack of strategy, shared theory of how we're actually going to approach the challenge. So members sit here with all this pent-up frustration, looking for somewhere to apply it. It's heart-breaking. If I say, "I'm a woman, therefore if I say this is sexism, this is sexism." We can understand where that comes from and why it's politically important, but it can't be the end of the conversation if the next step is, "and because I've decided this is sexism, I also get to personally decide the consequences and how your politics and self are understood." Because if there are other women in the group saying, "Actually, err I don't think that's what needs to happen," you reach the classic impasse baked into any political work that uses only individuated identity as its north star. This is actually what Asad Haider, a great writer we lost recently, talked about in his book *Mistaken Identity*.

A: And standpoint epistemology was really important because it dismantled this idea of objective scientific truth, and said every position is partial. Knowledge is always partial. You build it together with others. What's happened since then is something else. So my partial truth becomes the only truth. That's not it.

BB: Yeah, so we find value in the idea of partiality, and meaning is created by putting those different pieces together. The issue is when it's "My puzzle piece is the only puzzle piece."

A: Both those tendencies are very much focused on the internal conflicts of groups. For me there's always something missing when we focus only on that, it always happened in the absence of any collective goal. What a group is for? What are you doing together? Because sometimes I have the feeling lately that this part is missing from a lot of approaches. Is it just about interpersonal issues? Or are we doing something together?

BB: As in, where is the activity in the activism?

A: Yes, that's why I bring this idea of how we move from the self, from the "I", to the "we", because that's something we have to learn. That's why I put "context" as the first word in my notes. If we don't understand the context, we bring into groups a lot of the shit we've learned. We have to relearn. We have to unlearn it and learn a different way of thinking and working.

BB: I guess that's the fundamental part for me: a sort of self-extension. When you join a group or you join a struggle, it's something bigger than you, and you're able to feel part of that bigger thing, which I think is a core human need, no? Sometimes I think people are carrying themselves around like fragments in a bag, from fifty years of neoliberalism. I'm happy to hear you say we don't want to write something that's only, "We're all injured and we're all feeling." Plenty of people are already naming that. The thing that animates me is that these tendencies are actively hindering good political work, everywhere. Groups get set up to do a specific thing and they're failing to do this basic thing at a time when, literally, the wolves are at the door.



A: It cannot be only about the way I feel about the way you said something. Because then where is the conflict? Can we think about disagreeing? A conflict that doesn't escalate because it makes me feel whatever. It's like, this wall, you think it should be blue, I think it should be pink. We have to decide something and then we disagree on that. But there are no hard feelings. It doesn't make me think I cannot work with you because my truth is pink and yours is blue. It doesn't make sense. When people prioritize their feelings rather than their collective work, that means there is a poor political culture, a poor collective culture.

BB: Yeah, but people's tolerance for even that first feeling of, "Oh, this person sees it differently," is so, so low at this point. I've seen it so many times in meetings. People immediately jump to, "Okay, shit, we have to

form alliances in this room because I can see this person wants a pink wall and I want a blue wall," If a conflict is just a disagreement plus stakes, it can be generative, the stake is that the wall has to be one colour. We have personal and political choices about how we address that conflict. Is it a compromise? Is it, "Okay, we do a blue wall this week, pink wall next week?" Or, to extend the metaphor, do I take your pink paint and say, "This is a fucking stupid colour and you're an idiot for liking it," and kick over your can? If I do that, I would want to believe that groups can address the fact that's happened, create a bit of space to say, "That's not how we want to do things. Talk to me," and work out a way that it doesn't happen again. What tends to happen instead is that the group immediately explodes, panics. They're writing about it on Instagram! That's connected to so much of what we're talking about. People immediately turn a difference of opinion into something else. At the point where accusations are flying we can no longer have a regulated disagreement.



Space, collective body and imagination; politics of the Social Centre

There is a particular way you organize and learn to be with others politically in social centres, a particular way of being in a city too.

Taking a space, being responsible for everything that happens inside, where nothing is guaranteed, where care becomes an explicit task or an explicit absence. You have a whole world, with its goods and its bads, no one to blame or claim responsibility but your own collective body, the possibility to invent new rules, and the difficulty of dealing with all the problems (social, individual and political ones) of it.

There is a specific way of learning togetherness under that kind of experience, and it is not clear how that can be reproduced or transmitted in absence of them.

Circulation of knowledge and memory requires running an alive experiment in which knowledge reproduces and mutates along with the times. Changes to the city prevent us from that possibility. It is difficult nowadays to find experiences where you can expand your imagination beyond the preestablished limits of the lack of space and time: a precarious condition for collective intervention and a lack of collective culture.

It is a precarity that makes us sick. Dispersed people of the neoliberal metropole trying to gather to heal a bit to turn again to face new atomised harms.

Is there even such a thing as collective somatic politics in a time of social sickness?

Attacks on Linking: W.B Bion

My friend Katy is an art psychotherapist. Once upon a time in 2015 we were living together, three couples in a miniscule three bedroom flat off the Old Kent Road, South East London, in a block where the railings were made out of recommissioned old World War Two stretchers. Life-giving technologies reused as estate boundaries, so many layers of haunted. Around the same time, we were part of setting up a volunteer-run social centre in a 2,000 sq ft warehouse just off the street which had once had the highest number of pubs in London, and as of today has two. My grandfather and his brothers had their first jobs selling door to door on that huge life street. So very many layers of haunted.

It was in the new space we made that as well as experiencing some of the most generative political times of my life, any residual romance I had about the utopian easy-because-we-want-it-to-be of collectivity and the promise of large-scale group work drifted off on the breeze, not unlike the stench from the recycling plant across the road. Nevertheless, it was our stench. Our structure was an organic tangle of at least twelve linked collectives which at my stupidest point I was in seven of, plus a record shop, a practice room, a gig room, an office, a print space, an accountability working group (more on that later in this text) It was our mess. And it shaped us. The social centre and the crowded ex-council flat. It is all group work.

INSIDE YOU THERE ARE TWO GROUPS



Some years later, during her studies to gain her qualification, Katy told me about a method for working in groups at the core of her studies, a form of being together with almost no rules. Group relation.

I was terrified and enraptured by her tales from the course, electrified about the profoundly different approach to handling people's feelings it appeared to entail than what I used in my job as a trainer at the rape crisis centre. The stock it seemed to put in people's ability to hold themselves together in relation each other's sorepoints, each other's least charitable thoughts. She told me that W.B. Bion was a pioneer of this work, one of the first to pair psychoanalysis with the question of group dynamics. I already knew how quickly groups developed their own internal logic when working collectively towards a shared goal, but I was mystified as to why certain tendencies would stick so fast once they took hold.

I knew the specific quality of my friendships with those I had been in-group, or in collective with, the tone of the veteran, what we had been through and endured together sometimes becoming core to the connection even decades on.

The central concept in Bion's theory of groups is that inside every group, two groups exist: the "work group" and the "basic assumption group." These aren't factions, nor astrological signs or personality types, nor even necessarily inherent styles or subgroups within the group, and are more like dimensions of behaviour. He emphasizes that each group has elements of both the Work group and the Basic Assumption group within them, always vying and modulating,

All three distinct 'basic assumption' groups operate 'as if'. As if someone will come to save them or do the work for them (baD) as if they will be triumphant if they hound out an enemy (baF) or find the perfect leader (baP)

The **Dependency** Group (baD)

Waiting for rescue by a great omnipotent leader. Behaviour is passive and immature. Leaders are constantly replaced when they fail to solve everything.

The **Flight or Fight** Group (baF)

Behaviour here is about self-preservation. The group feels threatened and they resist with the survival response of fight or flight. Behaviour is destructive and groups are looking to place blame and pass on responsibility.

The **Pairing** Group (baP)

Hoping, waiting for rescue, two parties together to create the 'perfect' solution. Action is 'frozen'. However when a solution does emerge the group exterminate it so they carry on being inactive and hoping rather than taking responsibility and moving forwards.

Many years, five flats and two cities later, Katy said she'd give me fifty pounds to write about the demo of another band she was singing in. Her voice sounds like the wound you can't keep your hands off. The best song was called LHK. It's chorus went 'How do i do anything? With attacks on ...linking'

L = Love / Linking: the process of making and sustaining connections between people, thoughts and experiences.

H = Hate: not just anger, but the force that attacks or severs links.

K = Knowledge: the process of coming to know another person or reality.

For Bion, attacks on linking are those incidents where the mind can no longer tolerate ambiguity or frustration, so it attacks the very connections that make thinking possible. W.B. Bion also wrote that every group's behaviour is governed by the question: Who or what will save us? In left-ish circle our knee-jerk response to that is 'us, only us' or words to that effect, both a promise and a threat. It is worth, I think, being more specific.

Conflict and strategy

A: Last time I was in Madrid, a friend was complaining to me. The situation was not so dramatic, they were organizing something while some other people from a social centre programmed something at the same time. "These people, they did this, it cannot be possible!..." She was saying, "This is shit! How can they do this?" But I was like, "Darling, you know how a social centre works. Probably the person who published it didn't even get all the information. There wasn't a bad intention. They weren't trying to sabotage your event." I was listening and thinking, okay, fine. She was venting. It's like, okay, just say shit about these people. It doesn't matter because you're going to continue working with them anyway. Even in organizational chaos, we eventually have to get along.

BB: A few things come out of what you just said. Firstly, the space we can offer each other to just be like, "Oh my God, can I vent for a second?" and then it's gone. Just expel the thing. Let it out. I've noticed this in workshops as well. Sometimes very valid feedback makes this sense that we shouldn't police people's emotions too much, while also encouraging people to work out how to regulate them. Maybe what I need is to vent to my friend for two minutes, not spend twenty minutes in the meeting talking about how angry I am. The other thing is the good faith, bad faith question. Being able, as someone outside the immediate disagreement, to say, with love, "Yeah, that sucks. That's annoying. But this other reality is also possible, right?" As Dean Spade offers us "What else is true?" That's what I want from my comrades when I'm spiralling, some loving reality testing. Some people experience that as challenging their truth, or heaven forbid 'gas-lighting' which is a sin. If we're all these atomised subjects walking around with this golden thing of "my truth, my truth," we're never going to do anything together. When you break these things down into their smallest units, it's entirely possible for something like that either to become a major movement crisis or just a chat between friends at the bar.

A: Exactly. And I don't know how we become better at this because, as we said, it's cultural, emotional and political.

BB: I think in the UK people involved in organising are conflict-averse in different ways than I see here, but I do think that's shifted a bit in the last five to eight years, especially with respect for the idea of diversity of tactics. Thinking about Palestine solidarity, the

movement alongside gender justice that I know best, in the UK, there are people whose appetite for direct action is higher or lower. When you have a genuine mass movement as there is in the UK, people have more psychic space to tolerate those differences. Or the critique can be made mostly internally. "You're doing this, we're doing that. It's okay" I feel like that's been one of the biggest contrasts to here in Berlin where there of course absolutely not a mass movement. Public take downs and attacks so often claim to be about strategy, but almost always there's something additional going on. What does it mean when these tendencies are happening in a context of really high state repression, where like I said the enemy is actually at the door, breaking it down in some cases, and we can't unite?

A: Maybe it's an effect of the repression, because that escalates the feelings and the tension. An effect of repression is this division, this tension among people. Probably sometimes it's something we don't take into consideration. The last three years have been super tough. People are exhausted. People developed extreme on their positions, which somehow, for me, is the result of the strategy of power to divide us. For me it's the result of a very repressive atmosphere.

BB: That's really interesting. When people are being raided and so on, I would want to believe that any petty bickering or differences of opinion, at that point we pause all of that and rally around the person. Unfortunately that hasn't always been the case. It's a bit of a cliché, but solidarity has become selective.

Then when you combine that tendency with this the hardcore Berlin identitarianism, it leads to a situation where in some cases you have to be a specific type of person, from a specific place, with a specific status, to receive full solidarity when you're, say, beaten up by cops, or raided, and even then, I have watched people impose caveats. When you see repression only through the prism of identity, it creates a heat-seeking lens for who is deserving of solidarity. What risks are people going to be willing to take if their safety net is full of holes?

A: Well, there is this tendency to think escalating repression is more political, more radical.

PALESTINE
FEMINIST
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In Spanish we say, cuanto peor, mejor - the worse, the better. Some of us have always refused that. Repression is shit. It does not make things more radical. This idea that confronting it is more radical than building lasting things... in times of high repression that divides movements.

"We're right. And they repress us because we're right." Then you shrink, and you become less and less. Now we see where we are. It's not the first time I've seen this. I've seen it so many times in movements. "We have the truth, and they repress us because we have the truth." It's a dead end road.

BB: Yeah. The moral purity argument. It's about group strategy. There's always room for the hardcore vanguard in one corner but they are definitionally the vanguard - they're not meant to be everyone! When your political ideas begin to get any purchase in wider society you can choose to resent and retreat if they're not reproduced perfectly, or choose to move towards it, take the mic, correct the record.

A: Strategically though, what is a street demonstration for here? Is it a communicative tool? Is it an intervention?

BB: Psychologically I do think people have had experiences that are incredibly radicalising. But whether it's watching the gore footage out of Gaza, or being brutalised by the police at demos, those experiences don't actually necessarily focus the mind, politically. Being beaten up so much can make critical thinking harder, actually. Survival mode. It's how terror works. You need both strategy and robust collective thinking for that. Plus space to properly feel the rage and horror so it doesn't fill your whole political lens with blood and make you act insane. It's easy, and totally understandable, to feel after being beaten "I have shown solidarity and now I am vector for this entire issue so the state is coming down on me, personally and specifically." It takes discipline to pause and apply a strategic perspective. If left unchecked this creates a certain embattled self-regarding subjectivity which I think actually collapses analysis in unhelpful ways, and can make for some ...pretty strange group spaces. Thinking more widely now, the leap is being able to ask, what is winning in the context of Germany? Or Berlin? What would progress actually look like? But if I go to a demonstration and there are amongst tens of thousands of others, some old white Germans there for the first time, with signs saying

"Two-state solution", okay, that doesn't exactly make my heart sing. But it's a sign of something shifting there relative to the demos I was part of organising in 2023. This is the deeply unsexy unsanitary work. We need our own spaces to talk about the horizon we seek, yes, how to move people on from two-state delusions as quickly as possible, but the stakes are far too high for some kind of closed subculture. We also have to think about engagement strategies for people we wouldn't be friends with, especially in the context of onboarding people into groups.

A: I just don't feel I have to agree with all the people in a demonstration. It's not about me. I'm just there to enlarge this mass because we want to be visible. Like, I'm not going to organise myself with them. I know we don't think the same. I don't need to think the same as the people I do things with. Sure, it depends on what things. Small groups, affinity groups, yes, we have to discuss what we think depending on what we are together for. But in a demonstration? I don't know anything about these people's lives. I want people in the street. That's it.

Cutting Shapes

In the month of May of 2011, during and after the Arab Spring, there were a sequence of 'Square occupations,' from Occupy movements across the world to 15M in Spain. The main square of the capital, Madrid, was transformed into a camp that lasted over a month, a little city in itself. After a week there were commissions for every little single thing: kitchen, library, long term politics and short term politics, collective care/awareness, public services, spirituality..and of course, assembly organizing, decision making and group dynamics. The daily assemblies at dusk were to share the different working groups and were joined by around two or three thousand people, who raised their hands as a sign of agreement. It was magic.

But when it came time to move forward, some people resisted abandoning the small utopian experiment. Things were getting rotten. A small group of people, at the beginning enthusiastically decided to write a random list of decision-making rules, unaware that "by consensus" meant everyone had to agree with them first. One single veto could create a block. It was very hard to break the trap created by that random decision of rules at the initial honeymoon era of the occupation. That collective body was breathing together for a while, it was real and it was beautiful, but it was not meant

to last in that shape. Insisting on getting attached to certain shapes led to suffocation.

BB: We could talk about how groups are instigated, too and what common ground we need to have already vs. what we can build, I'm also interested in the ways we figure out each other's politics. You and I both have experience organising social centres. For a lot of people the group is "I want something where everybody agrees with me."

A: For me it's so empty. You put all the labels: decolonial, anti-racist, anti-sexist... with empty definitions. I'm not interested in that. I'm interested in practices. Going back twenty-five years, we were questioning this concept of liberated space, or free space. Here it's like, "This is a safe space, this social centre is anti-sexist." And we said, that doesn't exist! Let's stop saying a social centre is a safe space. It's not. We an try to build it. We can thematize it. But it's not true. There have been rapes inside social centres. There has been violence, all kinds of things. Because we are part of this world. We are not outside of this world. All the conflicts of the world cross us. So the question is, what are we going to do when something happens? How are we going to address it? That's the thing. From that practice comes our definition. I think there is also a methodological failure. Sometimes It's just not the right moment. At least we have to have a common practice. We have to have done something together. Without any common practice it's like, "Let's design a theoretical framework." Out of what? It doesn't make any sense.

BB: I mean it definitely sets people up disappointment. Somebody can hopefully declare a space anti-oppressive or whatever, but everybody has their own definition of what that means. Then they experience something they think is oppressive and immediately feel, "Well, the group has failed me." I think that's where our ideas hit their biggest challenge, though, because people would say, "Why should I trust that a new group is going to meet my needs? Why should I even be here?" If someone's experienced loads of discriminatory bullshit in other groups, I understand wanting to see that up front. It's like wanting a contract. The problem is that once you have a contract, if it's broken, then groups have to start functioning like a human resources department. I say that as somebody whose wage work is basically trying to make this stuff around safety and conflict and responding to sexual violence work inside groups and also workplace institutions. I'm very committed to this idea that lists of isms and phobias is a dead end... we've invented so many new ones since I first started think-

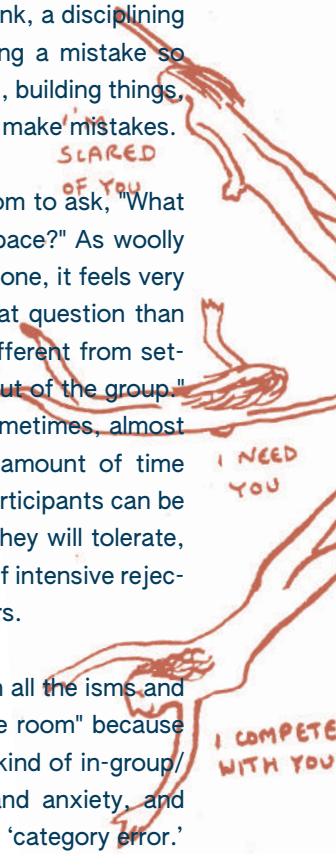
ing about this in the early 2000s, but we're no closer to having a common way of thinking through them or addressing them! It also becomes, I think, a disciplining tool. It acts on people's fear of making a mistake so they do nothing. If you're taking action, building things, learning together, then you're going to make mistakes.

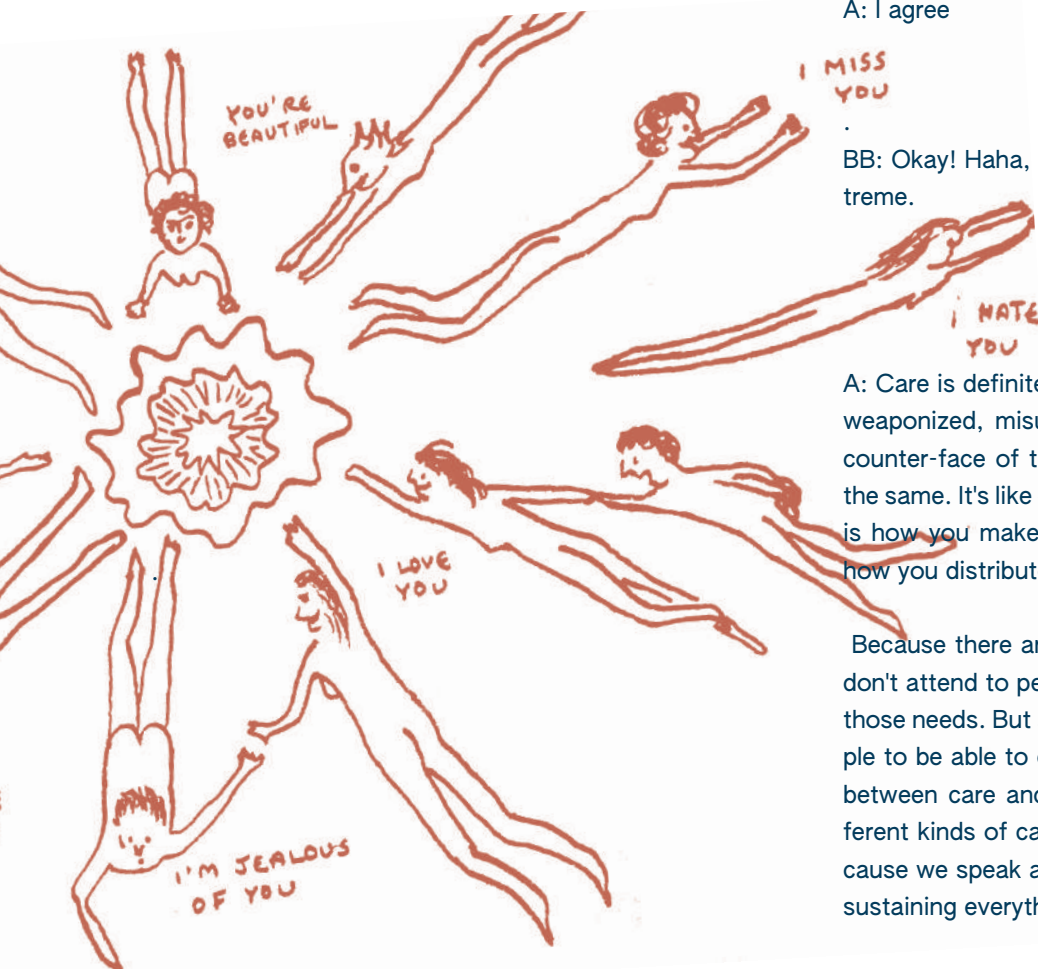
As a facilitator I am always making room to ask, "What do we need from each other in this space?" As woolly as that sounds, I think it does set the tone, it feels very different in sessions when you ask that question than when you don't. To me that is very different from setting rules like, "If you say this, you're out of the group." This is an issue of belonging thing. Sometimes, almost paradoxically, I find the shorter the amount of time people have together, the more real participants can be with each other, the more difference they will tolerate, because there isn't that in-or-out fear of intensive rejection in a group that forms for two hours.

I never, ever say, "First let's write down all the isms and phobias we're not allowed to do in the room" because that is fantasy work rooted more in a kind of in-group/out-group signalling, sets up panic and anxiety, and pretty soon you run into what I call the 'category error.'

Someone saying, "I might need a break halfway through," or, "I struggle to follow if things aren't written down so might need help with that" which is substantively different. Those things feel connected to practice and are also things that help me when I'm supporting a group. They're issue that, at the beginning of a journey, you can actually do something about or account for. Again, on the baby and bathwater tip, it's like: how do hold room for less predetermined space in a way that still opens the door for people who might otherwise feel like, "I don't want to go there because I won't be able to participate."

A: Self-representation is a performative way of dealing with so called politics. There's again this huge separation between what you say and what you do. Together with timing and methodology, there is another thing I wrote down. This idea of partiality. You cannot expect everything from one single group. We don't have to think the same. We don't have to become friends.





A: I agree

BB: Okay! Haha, I thought I was maybe being a bit extreme.

A: Care is definitely one of the concepts that has been weaponized, misused and overused. Care is like the counter-face of the word Power. They're more or less the same. It's like energy. It's always there. The question is how you make it visible, both power and care, and how you distribute it.

Because there are things that have to be done. If you don't attend to people's needs, there's no care towards those needs. But also it's a lack of power for those people to be able to express a need. So there is a relation between care and power. Right? I think there are different kinds of care. Some of them become visible because we speak about them, and others are just there, sustaining everything on.

I remember being with 500 other people in a building of Soviet Brutalist architecture on the outskirts of Prague. We were part of a working group dedicated to mapping the city and finding safe routes for the day of the demonstration (we didn't have Google Maps). This was a small group of people who didn't know each other at all, drawing maps for the collective safety of the participants. A group in which the rest of the people had placed their complete trust.

In another example, was in the national assembly of the Italian feminist movement *Non Una Di Meno*. A member of an anti-speciesist feminist collective takes the floor to complain about the lack of care and political sensitivity, because non-vegan people had eaten the vegan sandwiches and they had been left without anything to eat. Another spokesperson responded by highlighting the immense amount of care work the catering committee had put into the event, given the greater workload involved in preparing vegan sandwiches (which is why there were fewer of them) and many clapped. The issue could have been solved by distributing the food differently (vegan sandwiches only for vegans) but it nevertheless turned into a battle of words over the representation of feminist discourse. Obviously, there were other things behind...

Care is definitely one of the concepts that has been weaponized, misused and over-used.

BB: I wanted to ask you about Care. I'm increasingly feeling that when the word care gets used, we've already failed.

If you have to name it, demand it, or use it as a weapon, like, "Where is the care?", that already feels fucked to me. Not because there hasn't been enough care in the room, but almost because giving it a name means we're no longer just caring. We're self-consciously doing 'goodness' to be seen as appropriately caring? We've gone down a hole of insisting on quantifying something that, in ordinary human social relations, doesn't need to be visible in that way. I find it nauseating.

This is not to say social reproduction isn't a central issue to our material understanding of group work. But it's a bit like when people say, "I'm doing emotional labour." It's like, girl, no. I'm a human being and you're a human being, we are on earth to care about each other. like if we have to demand it, be passive aggressive about it, something's already off. What do you think?

BB: Totally. There's looking after the space, making things function, finding the route is so obviously care. Then there's the interpersonal side of sitting opposite somebody and asking, "How are you doing?" but I'm always a bit wary of overstepping. I don't necessarily want to ask somebody if they're okay, because maybe they don't want to answer. Is it also a British cultural thing? I don't ever want someone to have to perform how they're feeling because I've asked. Sometimes respecting somebody's humanity is just letting them turn up, do what they can do that day, and go home. I think I struggle with this expectation that everybody has to bring their whole self into every room. Some things are private.

A: It reproduces a power dynamic. What kind of care is invisible, like cleaning the kitchen, and what kind of care gives you credit because you're saying it out loud, on the mic?

BB: On the power piece, I came across this Italian word, *affidamento*. I don't speak Italian, but in "Being in Crisis Together," the Feminist Healthcare Research Group book, they talk about it as a kind of relational power. It's an alternative to talking about unequal distributions of power. It comes from the Milan feminist collective, where instead of saying, "There's unequal power here, therefore I'm being oppressed," it thinks about power as something where one person has a skill or an ability in a group - it's named so it's transparent, whether that's public speaking or making a spreadsheet. The *affidamento* idea is that, okay, in this moment you have this extra power. Almost like power as in superhero superpowers. I found it really helpful because the constant deployment of the word power in groups makes my heart sink a bit. I'm like, okay, what's actually happening there's a claim being made that somebody hasn't been given enough room, or feels pushed out. Which as Group Relation teaches us, is also a role in a group. But power as an accusation is so odd to me. It always smacks of either insecurity or ego when people immediately start bringing up Power. We're not the state! What if power is actually something we can generate more of for everybody? It's not a limited resource. And you know, if actually someone said, "I feel a bit disempowered, I want to try x or I want to be responsible for y" I'd rather hear that. First, it's an "I" sentence. Whereas what often happens is, "All the power in the room is with these people who have this identity," or "the facilitators have stolen all the power." A helpful critique can be, "It would feel nicer to have a bit more flexibility." That's easy to respond to. But when it's framed as, "You're hoarding power," it's a wild overstatement.

A: Going back to the text by Jo Freeman, in the seventies, when she talked about how there is no such thing as a laissez-faire economy because it's not fucking true, there's always intervention. There's always power. The same thing happens with groups. Like there is a material basis. I started talking about this in a feminist economy group in Madrid. We were discussing these things because part of the group was made up of a collective of domestic workers. We were really talking about actual care work. Who cares? Who cleans? Who looks after older people in a family? Is that paid or unpaid? Should we abolish these jobs or not? What does the distribution of care really mean? And what is the translation of that into everyday life, collective life, political life? We were organising with people who spent Monday to Saturday cleaning other people's houses. Care workers in the literal sense, not the activist sense. So we were standing in both fields.

How do we do it? Do we distribute it? Do we externalize it and pay somebody? What does externalization mean? For us it meant class, and it meant a way of avoiding a conflict by paying someone else to do it. We spent three years working on these questions. Again, this practice of starting from "I..." has a political context, breaking the one white male rational way of working together which was so dominating with no room for questioning, or uncertainty, or talking about how you felt. All of that was completely buried. The feminist movement came along and said, "Wait a minute. There are all these things going on in politics all the time that are really important, related to how we do things and distribute work." If we want to transform society, the way we relate to each other is important. A lot of theory came out of real practice of women really kicking the group's ass and saying, "We're not doing it like this anymore." Little by little it became separated from that practice. Now it's just a ritual. We start a meeting with "I feel...", completely out of context. Now the only thing that counts is "I feel." We've opened the door to exactly the problems you were talking about before, the excesses of the Standpoint epistemology. The thing is there are many truths in the room. We just went too far in the opposite direction. Maybe it's important to make an opening round about how you feel, how you're doing, but that's not the centre of the group. It's just one part of it. The answer isn't just, "I feel, I feel."

BB: If you look at the identity piece as well, and that very necessary challenge to an older way of doing politics. In groups where everybody is say trans, or its only people of colour, there is still conflict! The "I" versus the "we" feels really central to this. People want the "I" to

be acknowledged, but it sometimes feels like we make no investments as part of the "we." Everybody wants belonging, but they don't necessarily want to belong to the reality of the people around them. Whether that's an imperfect group with a couple of annoying people that you're still working with, or, "My neighbour said something racist," whatever it is, the question is always, what are we going to do?

A: Something I experience a lot here, and I think I have a problem with it myself. It's this classic discipline thing. I don't know exactly how to frame it. This thing that kills me. It's the lack of commitment.

BB: Oh Yeah. You said you were going to do something and then you didn't follow through. We have to have a trust relationship.

REGROUPING
REGROUPING
REGROUPING
REGROUPING
REGROUPING

A: In Berlin there's a layer of people looking for groups, friendship, belonging. I've been in groups where I was there just to do political work and nothing happened. got desperate. Then afterwards you'd see people making plans, going for beers, going to concerts together, birthday parties... all of that always happened. But between one assembly and the next, nothing happened. It became a very social scene. Then we commit to doing something and people say, "Actually I'm not coming because I have another plan." Which means a better plan with friends. It's like... sorry?

BB: It's the question of commitment versus lifestylism.

A: Because of language and other limitations, I have the impression people who arrive in Berlin collect political collectives in order to have a group or a community. Maybe it's their first political experience...I don't know. Years ago I ended up in groups that were like that. I actually closed down one group. It was very interesting because it was actually a relief for the others. You have to know when to finish an experience. I remember saying, "I don't think this is working. We should close this thing." I explained why. Something really interesting happened. Immediately people said, "Yes, let's finish this." Then everyone opened up and started expressing how uncomfortable they had been with the group, how trapped they felt and the way it functioned. They were actually relieved to close it, but nobody had dared to bring it up before.

BB: So it took someone a bit outside the social group to say it?

A: I had the opposite experience in another group as well. There were really hard interventions, accusations... I was super frustrated because, for me, nothing interesting was happening. I said, "I think we have to close this experience and start over from a different point." In the end I left, and the group carried on doing something I wasn't interested in. There was also a mismatch between what I thought the group should be and what other people thought it was. There was mutual frustration.

BB: Yeah. Sometimes somebody has to do the meta work and name the thing. In groups where there's a lot of tension it's almost like there's an unspoken rule that you're not allowed to ask, "Hey what are we actually doing?" Like in a family where you're not supposed to name what's happening. Or maybe that was just my family! I do think this question of discipline is something I'm really interested in. You go back into the archive and read about schisms, conflicts in groups, mismatched expectations, and there actually was quite a high level of what we'd probably call traditional accountability. People say, "This was my whole life priority." A lot of them were living in squats, not paying rent, able to be long term on benefits, so their main thing was these groups. Whether they were activist groups or mutual support groups, the amount of work people put into them was enormous. We do live in an extraordinarily atomised time where every minute could be used for productive labour, side hustles etc. I have the same feeling you do. I feel like I have a high internal accountability. If I say I'll do something, I do it even if it destroys me. Then you turn up to the meeting prepared and peo-

ple are like, "Oh, what was this again?" You're like, "The thing I spent four hours on but no problem..." I've had people say to me, "You're treating this like a job," or, "You're professionalising it." I do understand that critique. I resent it being called internalised capitalism. But I'm also like... how do you think people ever changed anything? Some of the most disciplined people who gave up the most have been the most exploited workers, the people with the least time and space, who still showed up and did things. So I think it comes back to this lifestylism thing. If you see this as optional, it will be optional... but also if it feels ineffective and circuitous, we don't have or believe in the strategy, then of course we're going to have one foot out the door.

A: It's always funny when someone who's dedicating eighty percent of their time to a job says that to me, about the professionalism I'm actually the opposite. Which is a problem. I should dedicate more time to paid work haha. But for whatever reason I didn't. So I don't experience it as a capitalist dynamic. If anything, it's the opposite. What I think is a capitalist dynamic is this need to produce something. I also really like groups where the practice is just, "Let's take our time." Like a reading group. Learning together. I had a reading group with friends for six years. We chose texts, edited them, made little books, sewed them together, distributed them to ourselves, read them and discussed them. It was super nice. One time someone suggested, "We could make a project out of this." We all said, "No." No project. Just for us. It was a community practice. We learned a lot. There was care. There were friendships. People supported each other. It was beautiful. We didn't produce anything, really. We made the books for ourselves. There was no project, no visibility, no outcome, no profitability. Nothing for your artistic CV. For me, that's also political. Not turning everything into a fucking project. It's just a life practice. A human practice.

BB: It's something that supports the people in the group to do what they actually want to do, which is learn. Then all these other things grow out of it. Even with all these frustrations, the group form itself can be such a magical thing. Whether it's something that comes together briefly or something that lasts six years. People wouldn't keep forming groups if there wasn't something in them. So while there's obviously a depressing side to a lot of this, I think there's also a lot of power in talking about the bad habits we fall into without becoming fatalistic. I notice it in myself. Sometimes somebody says one thing that sounds like it's heading down that really heavy cancellation vibes road, where they've already assessed everyone in the room through identity, and

my heart just sinks and I immediately think, "Okay, this group is going to turn to shit at some point." I want to find a way not to do that, it's just the fact it happens so often makes me think of that Einstein quote about doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results. I do think conversations like this, and trying to approach groups in a lovingly critical way, actually helps.

A: For me there's also a question, and maybe it's personal as well, about avoidance. One of my problems is not listening to my intuition. Sometimes I see what's happening and I don't say anything because I don't feel qualified, or I think maybe it's too soon, or maybe I'm wrong. Afterwards I feel guilty because I saw something and I didn't say it out loud. Of course you also protect yourself. Sometimes you don't feel safe. Sometimes you just don't give a fuck and you say it.

BB: There's also this natural desire not to escalate a situation.

A: It's also something we've dealt with over the years in groups, around mental health. That's why I always refer to the anti-psychiatry movement and those experiences. I remember I had a problem here with someone who had mental health issues. She basically harassed and extorted me. It was really horrible. I was talking about it with a friend who worked in the psychiatric movement in Trieste, and he said, "No. Even with us crazy people, there are rules. The fact that somebody is mentally ill or diverse is totally fine, but it doesn't allow them to behave like an asshole". Those are two separate things. They're not the same.

BB: Yeah. It also can't become this quiet thing of making allowances for truly unhinged destructive behaviours, because of their traumas and so on. That ends up dehumanising someone even more by not holding them accountable for anything. So-called accountability either has to be for everyone or for no one.

A: Of course, people have different issues and we take that into account. But we still have to put limits.

BB: We should be creating groups where people can participate regardless of mental health. But that also requires something from the person in terms of self-disclosure, doesn't it?

A: Yes, either the person has enough knowledge of themselves to be able to say, "This happens to me," or the group has known each other for twenty years and

already knows how to regulate things collectively.

A: There is this practice here of expelling people... for me? No way. It almost turns towards fascism. There's only one planet! There are people on this planet we don't like, but there's nowhere to send them. We have to learn how to live together. You can apply that to a city, a building, a collective, a housing project. The solution isn't expulsion. It's Stalinist. Who's left in the end? You just keep reproducing the purge over and over. If someone is genuinely putting people or the project at risk, then maybe they can't be part of that particular thing anymore. We also have to find a way not to just leave them on the street. But that can't be the first step.

BB: Or the other version is the dramatic ultimatum one: "I'm leaving."

A: Exactly. "This group clearly isn't for me." Yet you don't commit to anything and you're always leaving because you're always looking for a group that perfectly fits all your expectations.

BB: Comes back to that purity question. People are sadly so used to not having even small-ouch feelings or needs addressed in family home or work life, that when something feels not okay, they have to escalate the framing to be heard. Sarah Schulman of course covered this. That's why it's not, "We had a disagreement." It's, "I've been harmed," or even, "This is abuse." In our political worlds we're supposed to stop everything when somebody uses those words. I've heard words like harm and abuse used to describe things that were very clearly miscommunication, somebody losing their temper once, or conflicts that could actually have been resolved within the group. Maybe someone just needed to step away for a while and then come back. We don't really have practices for that. In the same way someone might have to leave a house project or shared flat, but they don't need to become homeless. Those are different things. There are of course plenty of models for this that look good on paper, but I wonder whether people actually follow them when it means swallowing their anger in a disciplined way and committing to the principle that we don't dispose of people, just as we don't believe in sentencing people to life inside prison cells.

A: We're talking all the time about collective dynamics, but this idea of having a group with principles where everybody has to think the same and have the same goal isn't exactly my political culture. I've always had a much looser kind of politics: It's open! We're going to organise this thing. Whoever wants to join, joins. It's assembly culture. We're together for now because we

“A political event touches some people like the end of a love affair”

want to do this thing. Also because, for me, autonomy politics has to be expansive. You want to include more people. If it's only about building an "us" close to itself, then it's the opposite of transformative politics. So the question is always: how do we include? How do we stay open? Not, "You can come if you already think like me." It's, "How do we transform the group so you can also become part of it?" That's a completely different starting point.

BB: With the Spanish-style assembly culture, there are open assemblies and closed assemblies, too, right? But in an open assembly, if it's advertised, literally anyone can come in off the street.

A: Exactly. It's a different thing. The tenants' unions work like that. It's completely open. Then they work politically, personally, on how people are feeling because they're under threat of eviction. This idea of "social unionism." It was really developed in Spain through the tenants' unions and the platforms against evictions and mortgages. It's this kind of political organisation that's based on a common problem, not an identity. It's transformative and anti-capitalist, but through the practice of the here and now. That's what defines it. You sit down at a table with your neighbour, who maybe doesn't even speak the same language properly, or is quite conservative, or has a traditional family, or comes from a completely different class. We're completely dif-

ferent people, but we're affected by the same problem. That's what brings us together. From there we start building relationships, mutual aid and care. Through that practice people also transform themselves. It's a way of becoming politicised.

BB: I love that. People arrive because they have a problem they want to solve, and then they discover a community they never had before, made up of people facing the same thing. They do not even have to already be politicised. It's a really different culture from a closed constellation of pre-existing groups that you already have to know about before you can even join them.

We could also probably have another whole conversation about security culture in Berlin. Obviously I get it because there has been infiltration and insane repression, but I also feel like the barriers to entry have become so high and this rarified question that sometimes you almost need to go on a course just to understand how these groups function and a lot of it is sadly still performance in place of the simpler stuff, which is like, put down the faraday case and learn how to speak to people who don't already agree with you!!! There should be a lower barrier to entry.

In all this, I'm trying to think about possible ways forward. We can only go forwards. It's about creating new norms for how groups relate, right? For what happens when conflict is raised, or somebody is named as having done the wrong thing. It's some of the hardest work I'm doing at the moment, being able to say, "I'm actually not going to go with you on this." If people try to recruit me into their analysis of a situation immediately it's a red flag. Solidarity means I'm with you on the fact that you're in pain, but because I'm not in the blast zone I can actually also see other parts of the picture, which could help you move through it. When you scale that dynamic up from an interpersonal situation to a group, we can actually support each other to learn and still get things done.

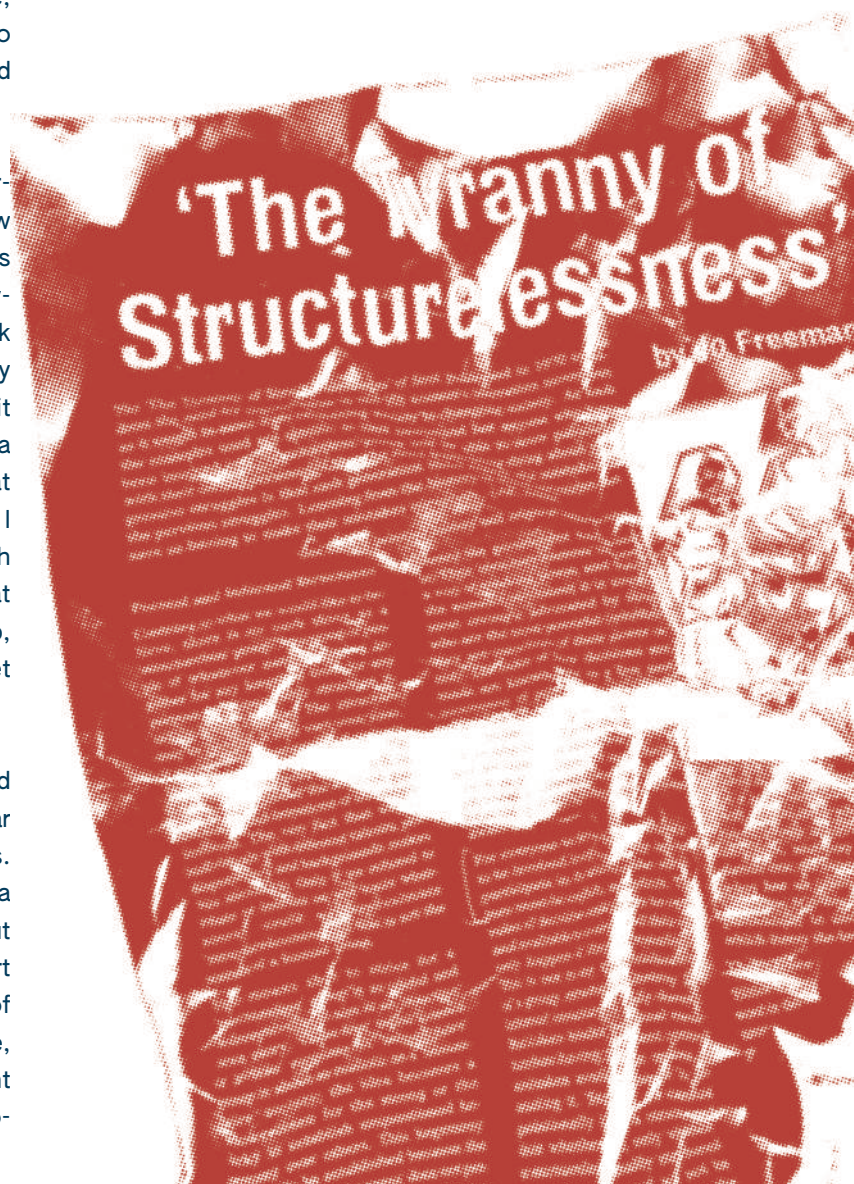
Sometimes I think about it like a sleeper cell. It will need lots of people going into different groups with a similar mission, quietly trying to shift the culture around this. If you can have two people in a room who can stop a spiral and say, "I see this a bit differently. What about approaching it this way?", maybe things will slowly start to move. Berlin feels particularly difficult because of everything we've talked about, but at the same time, we have the huge benefit that there are lots of different cultures converging here. And activity! There are peo-

ple doing housing work, mutual aid, union organising. If you're organising a union you're absolutely going to have to work with people you disagree with, because the goal is power. More power for everyone.

A: What a group does is about building collective power, what a group thinks is not the sum of every single individuality, it is something else. It is not gonna be exactly what you individually think and that is ok.

What we can do together is more than what we can do separated.

I think we'll stop here. It was a nice talk.





Archive of feelings: the emotional dimension of collecting memory.

While collecting testimonies for the hacerlaboratio.net Archive, I learnt that creating an archive of a collective experience meant working with the attachments and detachments generated by that experience. Rebuilding connections through this process constitutes the first act of care which is required for an archive of that kind to come into being. This meant accepting its partiality, leaving it open to dialogue with both memory and the present, accepting its transformation over time, and opening it up to multiple uses.

There is a dimension within this that is fundamental but unrepresentable: the feeling. The material of the sensitive, the net of emotions that hold the experiences, emerge in the process. This is essential when constructing narratives, since it gives interpretive clues. Not abstract, but concrete, the tones and the feelings expressed say more than the mere information about any specific episode. There is a time for silence and a time to speak. We need to process our experiences. The feelings about an experience is not the experience itself, but a narrative which doesn't consider those feelings could never grasp the meaning of these experiences, their real effect on the personal and collective body. Building collective memories is a way to process collective trauma which, as we can see nowadays, is indispensable to resist dehumanization.

I am on the roof at Mayday Rooms, the social movement archive where I worked more than a decade ago. Owing to its collections, which are a repository of donated materials gathered over the lifetimes of the '68ers, libertarian communists, 90s anarchists and their adjacencies, the building seems to pulse with tussles over meaning-making and the ever present question of who owns history. I pulled sometimes playfully on the threads of the psychedelic tapestry of protracted conflicts that featured in this collectively-run place, not always understanding who was at whose throat.

I am here looking for traces of how groups in previous decades might have handled their personal and political conflicts, exploring two '70s pamphlets: *Red Therapy* and *Humpty Dumpty*. *Red Therapy* was a self-organised, leaderless, radical therapy group that grew out of small informal meetings in London in 1974; its members were involved in various political organisations and movements, including the women's liberation movement, and the libertarian communist group East London Big Flame. Their shared anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian thinking is reflected in the group's experimental approach, producing a number of educational pamphlets which describe their group processes, therapeutic techniques and advice about setting up your own group.

Red Therapy's pamphlet is a gorgeous mental synthesis of these experiments between people, narrating their experiences, arguing that psychological distress was rooted in capitalism, patriarchy and authoritarian family structures, that psychiatry often functioned as social

We are the grimace of what we dream of being - says the tango song

I am deeply concerned about the urgent need to create enemies. Not because there aren't any, but because we seriously fail to conceptualize, identify, combat, and even ignore them—because I am concerned that:

We waste all our energy on indignation, an emotion that can be as characteristic of social movements as it is of television

We actually buy into the fairy tale that there is one path that will bring us happiness, liberation, revolution, and who knows what else—instead of recognizing that the paths are very different for each of us

We create this great internal enemy and, instead of addressing the real conflicts we have among ourselves, we devote ourselves to policing one another and singling out our fellow women in particular when they do things that trigger our own insecurities

Thinking too much about your enemy can backfire—just look at Uma Thurman in **Kill Bill**; in the end, she succeeds in Killing Bill and then doesn't know what to do with her life
Arrogance—a horrible emotion typical of people who lack self-criticism and humility—is usually moralistic, apologetic, and haughty; it is one of the seven deadly sins

I know that every community shapes a way of life, and that just as it can be very empowering, it can also be totally coercive. If anyone thinks that by criticizing and being a little cynical, I've also found my comfort zone, they're wrong. Defending one's own position is relative, just like any other, and can be just as doomed to the most abject failure as any other—not everyone wants to be or not be a binary person, to be or not be a lesbian, to be or not be polyamorous, etc.

Being moralistic versus being prudent—better yet, read, listen, and understand.

There are no positions that are inherently more “political.” Defining yourself in one way or another doesn't make you any more or less political than another person, nor any more or less valid.

Let's stop caricaturing others. Privileges exist—they're very real—but usually, you don't have them all (that doesn't mean they don't exist, but rather that they can be relative, reinforcing or undermining one another; in any case, we must work to redistribute them to dismantle the mechanisms that make them possible, but be careful when pointing fingers—they might point one back at you, and you have to be willing to face that too, except for the very fortunate).

-Sometimes getting off the pony (or getting on and off) means acknowledging that we have privilege; other times, getting off is actually getting on, because it means stepping out of the role of victims. Victim-centered politics is what they expect from us—the place where they've put us and want to keep us. That position isn't earned by romanticised or by creating comparisons in which certain forms of pain are supposed to matter more than others. I'm not saying we don't have priorities—we need them!—but we can support one another by understanding the uniqueness and irreducibility of our experiences. Breaking away from the race to see who has it worse is a good way to get off the pony.

-Once again, don't caricature the (supposed) enemy.

Translation of excerpt from

Bajarse del Pony: Separatismo, arrogancia y construcción del enemigx



control, and that therapeutic solutions needed to be 'anti-adaptive' to our oppressive political conditions. In practice their work seemed to involve a lot of punching pillows. Leafing through, stopping to giggle every few pages at their devastatingly accurate illustrations on the nature of groups, the way we love and hate with equal fervor inside a group, I could not help but be struck by the level of vulnerability these comrades leant into with each other. What level of trust is required to scream and cry and talk about your mother with people who you also organise with, and whether anyone I know could or would ever imagine doing that today.



The Crucifixion of St. Paul

It's an unseasonably warm night and an event is wrapping up at a local social centre in my kiez. It is a small event hastily organised by a local political education collective as some activists connected to the Stop Cop City movement happen to be in town. This campaign emerged in Atlanta, Georgia in 2021 to oppose the construction of a police training facility in the Weelaunee Forest, and drew international attention after the killing of Tortugueta, a forest defender, who was shot and killed by State Patrol officers during a raid on 18 January 2023. Dozens of activists were then charged under Georgia's Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act in the largest racketeering prosecution ever brought against a protest movement in U.S. history. Sixty-one people were indicted alongside bail funds, legal observers and community organisers. The training centre ultimately opened in 2025.

The activists visiting Berlin are humble in the wake of this result, but also don't speak about it as any kind of 'failure.' They speak on their tactics, on the momentum and trust built between people, the role of prisoner solidarity in their work now. My ears perk up when they speak about the sheer variety of involved participants, mentioning their use of the St. Pauls' Principles as a core way they were able to unite and build this giant multi-racial community coalition. These are points of unity came about in St Paul Minnesota, and developed by the varied groups organizing to disrupt the Republican National Convention of 2008, and notably adopted during Occupy Wall Street.

The St Pauls' Principles comprise these four points:

OUR SOLIDARITY WILL BE BASED ON RESPECT FOR A DIVERSITY OF TACTICS AND THE PLANS OF OTHER GROUPS.

THE ACTIONS AND TACTICS USED WILL BE ORGANIZED TO MAINTAIN A SEPARATION OF TIME OR SPACE.

ANY DEBATES OR CRITICISMS WILL STAY INTERNAL TO THE MOVEMENT, AVOIDING ANY PUBLIC OR MEDIA DENUNCIATIONS OF FELLOW ACTIVISTS AND EVENTS.

WE OPPOSE ANY STATE REPRESSION OF DISSENT, INCLUDING SURVEILLANCE, INFILTRATION, DISRUPTION AND VIOLENCE.

WE AGREE NOT TO ASSIST LAW ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS AGAINST ACTIVISTS AND OTHERS.

As the activists noted, not everyone who didn't want Cop City wanted to climb a tree to stop it. Some are elders, even Christian church groups. Others had more environmentally concerns, others still who wanted the total end of the police. All were united in not wanting this place to exist. I am thinking as they speak of a dear friend who is in prison on remand without trial in England, about the work of prisoner solidarity as its own victory. These two activists, who, like some of the other Stop Cop City co-defendants, are white, say a few closing words of solidarity and underline both the stakes of the imprisonment and the ultimate role of white supremacy in policing and prison, in America.

In the silence, a lone voice from the back says: "It's okay, we love to watch white people die."



atomised
social media
subjectivity

Rigidity

self-promotion
is conditioned by
algorithmic
platforms

Identity

self-representation
labels and identity tags as value-based
shortcuts that divide and collapse

Shared identity inside group
doesn't prevent conflicts
more to do with way we relate

Group is more
and different to
the sum of individual
identity + experience
SOMETHING ELSE

Agreements or
Rules

our limits
what we tolerate
how we regulate

Big System ^{CONFUSION}
Little System

Accusations of
"power" dynamics
Demands for
"care" (vague)

engagement strategies
for people we would not
want to be friends with

dynamic

group?

has a
structure

al

collective
goals

how capacity
is distributed

capacity in the
collective dimension is
THE POWER the
group has

No group will meet every
emotional, personal, social, material
NEED

have a healthy threshold
for disappointment

Explicitly VISIBILISE
more roles and tasks

Groups should help
individuals lose their
fear by increasing
your personal AND
collective capacity

Discipline
and Commitment

Priorities

is politics what
we do only with
"leftover" time

"I don't have capacity"

REAL MEANING

"I'M NOT
INTERESTED"

"I'M SO
TIRED"

"THIS IS
TOO
MUCH"

"DON'T PUSH
ME"

"I DON'T
WANT TO"

My eyes dart across the room. They are sitting cross-legged on the floor in a keffiyeh with a group of friends, smirking. The second hand embarrassment feels almost overwhelming for a second. I am struck by the deep and fatal strangeness of it, not just the comment itself, but the conditions that make it an appropriate thing to say. The person on the stage is clearly momentarily dumbstruck and confused. "Okay.. well, that's, ah... not very nice." There is a little awkward laughter and the event wraps up. The tools we have at our disposal like love and welcoming and unity against the extraordinary ballooning of state repression sit there untouched. I am struck by the viciousness of the remark, then by an unexpected feeling: pity. A political culture that produces this kind of alienated vindictiveness feels woefully estranged from ordinary human encounter. The fatally atomised subject is fraying at the seams. Why is this okay? What new social norms can stamp out the apparent need to use of this kind of casual venom, and how do we get there?

Discipline and Punish? Diagnosis: Berlin

I despair over certain patterns of a limp, self-regarding affect that appears hungry for any available enemy to chew on. It happens over and over, this set of ordinary and seductive tendencies, righteously addictive and flourishing in conditions of atomisation, precarity and moral urgency, they hollow out all forms of collective life. Text from a friend who used to live here: "I don't like to essentialise but what IS it about that place?" We wonder if is there something specific to the texture of this city which promulgates such viciousness between would-be comrades, or whether this proposition itself is its own form of yet-more self-regard. (I talk to a friend who lived in the Pacific Northwest in the 2010 about these feelings. He smiles at my suggestion that this is in any way specific to Berlin.)

This is a city of possibility and arcane strangeness. It is also a city of weak ties, a self-conscious reinvention destination. In the English speaking left milieu our radical horizons floats above the actual city-as-society, people leave as they came.

Our connections wind instead around precarious projects, scenes and identities, where we demand instant gratification, belonging, 'chosen family,' and demands of Care and statements of Need, to rampage through until you find the group that mirrors every aspect of who you are and what you currently believe.

Audre Lorde's pronouncement that "caring for myself is an act of political warfare" is laptop sticker level popular yet in light of its contemporary usage, the structure of feeling around care, one cannot help but wonder: War on who?

People are also removed from their immediate physical neighbours and fellow workers, often through precarity, invoice culture, and the intergenerational locality and rootedness requires closeness.

Many come here already nursing the raw tips of uplifted roots, by choice or terrible circumstance. Working in coalition demands tolerating friction, but to consider coalition at all you need to have a strategy as well as a lifestyle.

What is to be done? Search me. I mean... It brings me no pleasure to say so, but amongst many other ideas, it's got to be a case of actively rooting here, in spite of everything around the nazi rubble, maybe learn German so you can speak to your neighbours? I don't know, do an entryism in your local liberal-leaning community group or (good heavens) even Die Linke if you've got the stomach for it. If they even let you. Find one of many ways to hold fast and build power, name the real enemies, joust with the Zionists and keep pushing.

All I know is that we either insist on being of this place by stubborn virtue of being in it, and take our place to fight to act upon it, or we are floating cosplayers, delulu useless toothless, receding into the cracks. Exactly how they'd prefer us.

"Groups are the infrastructure of political work. To keep going, we will need to learn to tolerate the grating emotions they bring up. Rather than resist the swamp, we should learn to live in it."

Lily Shepherd
Experiences in Groups
2026

On Capacity

BB: If capacity is framed as just the space we have for political work after waged work, life, gym, friends, my dance class, all the rest of it... are we actually meeting the moment?

I keep thinking about how friends in parts of the world where daily political work is not an add-on, because death stalks them. I think about friends in the West Bank. It's interesting that we talk about capacity in these terms, like, "Well, of course this is the last thing I prioritise." I also don't want to be unfair because we both acknowledge that people often have very little time. I'm not saying everything would magically work if everyone were just a bit more disciplined. But I do find myself asking what is working, what isn't, and why.

A: Yeah. You and I both have this tendency of, "Okay, now I'm going to hold this thing together," and we have tried also, "Now I'm going to step aside and see what happens." We try different strategies in practice. We look for where the problem is. But somehow we don't thematise the issue inside the group. And even when you do, because I've tried, the rest of the group doesn't really take it on board. It's more like, "Yeah, yeah, that's true... We never finish what we started. We have too many things". But I have to stop myself because I know it doesn't do any good just complaining... it doesn't help anyone.

BB: Does it feel accurate to describe your role in group as like, invisible coordination? I don't know if that's too strong. You were talking before about invisible labour, and right at the beginning you mentioned the feminist economy texts.

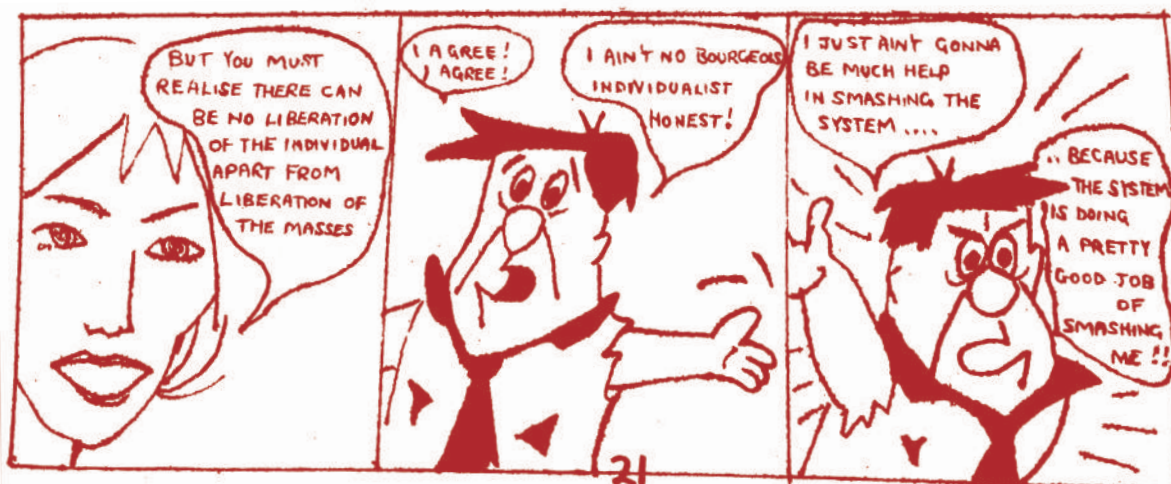
A: I think we all know enough, even if it's only a little, about reproductive labour to recognise that there are tasks that simply have to be done. You don't need a deep knowledge of feminist economics or group structures to know there are visible jobs and invisible jobs, and different divisions of labour.

BB: Jo Freeman says that if you don't make a structure explicit then an invisible one forms instead, and it's much harder to name or change if it isn't working. Do you think coordination is one of those things? Because in my experience nobody ever says, "This person is coordinating this month." It's just somebody you know finding the room, getting the keys, doing the admin, setting the agenda... and then next month they're still doing it. Is there a simple technocratic solution where you just rotate it? Like, everyone takes a turn so it doesn't become a pipeline. Or is it something more fundamental and psychological?

A: There are different things. Like, rotation has a good side, because it distributes the work and gives people the possibility of learning skills. But it also has a downside. Some people really don't want to do a particular task. Other people enjoy it, they're good at it and it comes naturally to them. So there are roles, specific skills, specialities. It's also about how we manage those things. Rotation can help, but there are people who genuinely like coordinating and people who are terrible at it, or don't have confidence to do it.

BB: Then what happens? The task ends up returning to the same person because eventually someone says, "Okay, I'll do it." Not because they want power, but because otherwise it simply won't happen.

A: For me the best way to solve those technical things is through automatism: We meet twice a month. We already know the day, we already know the place. We don't have to organise it every time because it's auto-



matic. The more automatic something is, the easier it becomes. The problem comes when something changes. Someone writes to say we can't use the room, or one of the spaces isn't available anymore. Then someone has to solve it, and there isn't really a culture of someone just jumping in and saying, "I'll do it." So again it ends up being the same person. Then there's the content. If we all decide at the previous meeting that we're going to read something, collect texts or prepare a discussion, and then nobody does it, that's different. You can't automatise that. It's about whether you actively choose to dedicate one hour of your week to this thing. Whether you prioritize it. That's not really about skills or technical organisation. It's about deciding that this commitment matters because you've made it with other people. And also because the practice itself has meaning. It's a way of creating something together. It's a tiny way of turning upside down the structure that's already been imposed on your time. Your week is already organised for you, and you're saying, "No, I'm going to dedicate time to this other thing." Something that isn't productive in the usual sense.

BB: Yeah. I think "automation" maybe isn't quite the word, but making routines. We always meet on this day, in this place. Humans naturally build habits around those things. Like sport, or whatever it is. If it's built into your life, it becomes much more frictionless to stay involved. Is it something about how individuals relate to each other?

A: Capacity is the key. Usually people use the word as an individual thing. "I don't have capacity." But we should think about it collectively. What is the capacity of the group? That's already de-individualising the dynamic. What is the baseline activity of the group? What does this group actually do? The capacity of the group is its power. The power the group has together. Then structure is about how we distribute that power. That's what those feminist texts are talking about. There is a certain amount of power. The question is how we use it and how we distribute it. Collective capacity is the power of the group.

BB: Ooh, that's really nice. So capacity is the power of the group, and structure is how it's distributed. I guess we can connect that to dynamics, because the dynamics depend on how that capacity is organised.

A: Yes. And then the dynamics are affected by all these other things. In theory it's simple, no? We have a goal, we have a certain amount of capacity, we distribute it, and we try to reach the goal. But the dynamics are af-

ected by everything people bring into the group. That's

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where all these tendencies come from. When we don't have enough capacity to make our own rules, then we get swallowed by all these dynamics, creating an enemy. Internal conflicts... All these things.

The gap between revolutionary language and what groups are actually doing becomes enormous.

BB: Something else I wanted to get into, because you mentioned it before, is this question of political groups not being friendship groups. At the same time, the ones I've seen endure the longest do build certain kinds of bonds. We have to create an environment that people actually enjoy coming to, to some extent. Maybe it's intellectual stimulation. Maybe it's, "I love hearing how other people think about this." I don't know if it's Berlin-specific, but I notice this almost sadistic thing where people go to meetings already knowing they're going to have a fucking terrible time. Like, "Oh God, I've got the meeting tonight." Obviously this work isn't always going to be joyful, especially in the current political moment. But it still feels like we have a choice about how we treat each other interpersonally. We can have really robust disagreements in a meeting and still be basically kind to each other. We can still welcome people, at the level of social reproduction. I often feel like that culture is missing here.

A: Do you mean people keep going even though they know it's going to be horrible? Like they feel they have to be there? That they have to belong, to have this identity, because otherwise they'll end up isolated?

BB: I think that's true on some level, and in some contexts. But I was thinking more about how we make people actually want to come to meetings, without it becoming group therapy or everyone having to be best friends. Like, is there a way of normalising certain ways of interacting that make people want to stay involved? Even if they don't know anyone yet. Because that seems really important. It's a form of hosting, I think. There's that cliché that the right seeks converts and the left seeks traitors. The right wants to bring people in and persuade them while the left is locked into paranoia "They'll dilute the group, they're not radical enough."

grande è il disordine testa dei compagni unque preoccupante

A: For me this connects directly to capacity again. We were talking before about groups needing to become bigger. To welcome people. That's a political responsibility. Otherwise you're prioritising your own comfort, your own feelings of being okay, over actually changing anything. Politics is intervention. It means changing something. That means reaching more people, confronting different opinions in order to enlarge your collective capacity, dealing with differences, thinking about how we stay together in an atmosphere that constantly pushes us apart.

The easy thing is to do nothing. Stay home, watch a film, go to a club, be with your friends. Being with people you don't know, having to agree things, discuss things... that's already an intervention. When I see this tendency here of, "I don't want to get my hands dirty by relating to people who aren't enough..." I find it so childish. Again it goes back to Jo Freeman. She describes it brilliantly. It really resonated with me when she said that this tendency is much more common among people who call themselves radical than among those who don't. More common among people who stress personal change than institutional change. More common among people who can only imagine revolution than among those who are satisfied with smaller successes. More common in groups with vague goals than in groups with concrete ones. It's this purity thing again. The big word of revolution means anything in between isn't good enough. So in the end you don't do anything because it's never good enough.

BB: So four revolutionaries who completely agree with each other in a room become preferable to four hundred people who are interested but aren't all sure yet. The gap between revolutionary language and what groups are actually doing becomes enormous.

A: Freeman describes it through these different axes. One is personal change versus collective or institutional change. Another is this level of radicality. Another is concrete goals versus vague goals. Then there's this idea of revolution versus smaller achievements. It's really useful because you can almost map where a group sits. It reminds me a bit of Saul Alinsky.

BB: Does he basically argue that the closer you are to

the problem, the more concrete your goals become?

A: Yes. The more affected you are, the less pure you become because you actually want to solve something. We had this when I was younger, there were all these arguments about negotiating with institutions. You know.

"We don't talk to institutions." Well... if you're defending a building where families are living and you're trying to negotiate their right to stay, of course you have to talk to institutions. You have to negotiate with people you don't like.

You're directly affected, so you use whatever tools you have to achieve a concrete goal. It's very different from talking abstractly about destroying the state while never having to deal with any concrete consequences. Then it's easy to say, "I don't talk to anyone who doesn't think exactly like me." But actually you're not changing anything because the goal is so far away that nothing is really at stake for you.

BB: Yeah. It makes me think about what progress looks like relative to how desperate people are. If revolution is almost a pet project, an abstraction, then it's easy to wallow in a rigid fantasy of the perfect outcome and then just go home afterwards. Whereas effective solidarity movements, historically, have usually been about slowly normalising opinions. Getting people who weren't directly affected to widen their empathy, shifting what is politically possible over time. And let me be real, I understand totally why people don't want to "hold their nose." Thinking about Germany, you know, structures like Die Linke, there are moments where it feels like civil society completely failed to step up when doing so would have mattered. I understand why people feel that is unforgivable. I have my days when I consider that equivocation a permanent stain that will never wash off. I can feel that way and also understand it, with minimal pleasure, either, to be an essential vehicle against what is to come. But strategically, when you look back through history, people have always had to make alliances with imperfect blocs to get somewhere in desperate times.

A: The thing is, most of the situations we're thinking about don't even reach that level of negotiation because we don't have that kind of power. We're mostly having theoretical discussions about radicality. It's just my opinion and your opinion. And there's this overvaluation of individual opinions. Like, I'm not here to listen

to your opinion. I'm here to think together about political situations, about contexts, about goals, about discussing something, maybe taking action at some point. With this whole thing about radicality, I think what's happened is the same thing that happened with care. Or with decolonial, anti-racist... all these words become aesthetic categories. What do you actually mean when you say "radical"? For me, radical means trying to get to the root of the problem. Continuing to think critically all the time. I still catch myself swallowing things as though they were good because I live in this system. Constantly trying to understand how the world changes, how power works, how it affects different people. It's educating yourself. It's connecting that thinking with practice. It's asking, "What am I going to do with the amount of power I actually have?" That's radical. Not just carrying a flag, repeating a slogan, going for a beer.

BB: For me this question connects to the idea of maximalism. Sometimes, expressing only the absolute most maximal position becomes a religion for people. "This is who I am." But in practice, especially in our context of insane repression, what matters is yes, knowing exactly what you believe while also considering, "What is most effective to lead with in this room? In this demonstration? In this intervention?" Like, there are things I believe very, very deeply about, for instance, the right of oppressed people to resist using armed struggle and what may need to happen for their goals of liberation to come to be, that I don't necessarily bring to every placard or every room, when immediate goal is persuading the already hostile to move from where they are closer to where they need to be. It's a bit like what you were saying about the social centre. Deciding whether to cover the front of the building in banners wasn't about compromising your politics. It was about thinking carefully about who would feel able to walk through the door.

A: Well, somehow we arrive back where we started, which is the question of the goals of a group.

There are always these two levels. The personal goals of belonging, identity, making friends, breaking isolation... and then the collective political goal. It's always about the relationship between those two things.

When the so-called radical slogan becomes just self-representation, everything shifts onto yourself. "I feel comfortable here. I'm recognised here. These are

my people." But you're not actually intervening in anything because nobody else is going to join the group. So there's an imbalance. When you know what you think, when you're confident in your politics, you can try different strategies. You can build bridges, create dialogue, be open and expansive. That's a political intervention. It's about expanding practices, not closing them around yourself. Of course there are groups that just want to exist for themselves, among themselves. Fine. That's not my thing.

BB: That bit about political self-confidence is really interesting. If you take that bridge-building idea forward, I think one fear people have is that if they build a bridge, other people will walk across our bridge and dilute what the group is or thinks until there's nothing left. That suggests you have very little real belief in your own politics. You really think someone can just trample over them? Maybe it connects to political ancestors, to organising alongside people who've been doing this for thirty or forty years, which I've had experience of. That seems very different from being in a room where everyone is the same age and relatively new. Nothing is completely new. There are always people you can ask, "What worked before?" I think there's something about approaching groups with a bit of humility. I've also noticed that when one group approaches another about collaborating, the first response is often suspicion. "What do they want? If we work with them then we're connected to that group..." It almost feels like branding. I like marketing. And I wonder how much social media has seeped into the way we relate politically.

A: There's a lot of fear. Let's come back to the diagram again. For me, a group increases your capacity. It increases your power to do and achieve more than you could alone. Once you discover that, you become empowered and you lose fear. But sometimes fear itself becomes collective. It's the fear of losing what you've built. Or.. No, you don't lose it. It changes. It transforms. You can win and you can lose, because accumulating power isn't the goal.

BB: Where groups don't explicitly understand themselves as building collective power, it's much easier for them to fall into these patterns of fear. "We're this little group. Other people are going to infiltrate us. They're going to take over." The strongest movements I know to be the strongest take risks. They're trying to save houses, save jobs, save people's lives. They have to experiment politically. You might lose, but at least you're trying something different. If you never open yourself, eventually the energy disappears. And groups are at

their most magical when things are actually happening, things you can describe. You organise something together and loads of people come. Or you work on something concrete together and it creates something else. You said before, groups reduce fear because they increase your collective capacity. They also increase your personal capacity. One thing we don't talk about enough is the personal transformation that happens when you do something with other people that you could never have done on your own. Afterwards it stays with you. It becomes part of how you understand yourself. You think, "Oh, I'm someone who can do that." Especially now, when physical social spaces are so scarce, there's the difference between people who've had those experiences and people whose main experience of politics has been online or much more abstract.

A: When you mentioned social media, I was thinking about that too. It really conditions how people relate to each other. People are always making calculations. "Will this project me? Will this become a project I can put on my CV? Will I get something back from it? Sometimes it's more important to say, "I was involved in this political thing," than whether it actually worked or had any impact. I belong to a generation that was doing politics before social media. Free culture, anonymity, collective authorship... all of that was really important. We deliberately removed our individual signatures, certainly no names. Then social media arrived and everything became quite the opposite. Suddenly there were stars. People became personalities. You had to name who said what. It looked like giving credit, but often it was just self-promotion. Anonymity suddenly became old-fashioned.

BB: Yes I think about zine culture in this way, the important thing was just that the thing existed not authorship or tracking one person's political development based on their statements. Names were not central.

A: Now it's completely different. And it's here to stay. People represent themselves all the time. You build a character and then you have to maintain that character. The front page becomes more important than trying different things. Experimenting becomes difficult if it means stepping outside the character you've built. Relating with people who are different becomes risky because it doesn't fit the script. So you stop experimenting. You just stay performing the same role.

BB: I think it's fair to say we've both had experiences of movements and groups generating a huge amount of emotion and not a lot of results. And results become

subjective things. Who can be trusted. Who can't. What are the particular words or dynamics that, as soon as they appear in a room, make you think, "Oh no, here we go again."

A: Exactly. But she [Jo Freeman] is talking about something else. She starts from the point that a structured group has a task. That's the beginning of our whole diagram. Then she says that when a group is involved in a task, people learn to get along with others as they are, and to put aside personal dislikes for the sake of the larger goal.

That's exactly what we were talking about before. The task itself limits this compulsion to remodel every person into our own image of what they should be. Groups without clear goals, or with very vague goals, are much more likely to get trapped by emotional and interpersonal conflicts because... what the fuck are we actually doing together?

BB: I mean, it must be nice to be in a group where that doesn't happen. Maybe it's easier in bigger groups. Or maybe it's just about acknowledging that difference. What I like about putting Jo Freeman together with contemporary identity politics is that it suddenly becomes three-dimensional. Yes naturally, race, gender and all of those structures matter deeply. I consider the Black feminist texts that extend exactly these essentially questions. Reified organisations like the Black Panther Party were also incredibly structured and riven with intensely cruel and terrifying internal behaviour. So the interesting question isn't structure versus no structure. How do we create structures that have humanity, flexibility and are people-sized, while also encouraging discipline, responsibility, tenacity at the group level and enough collective capacity to actually do what we came together to do? Maybe there isn't one perfect point on the graph. Like I know different groups probably need different things.

A: Definitely. I keep coming back to this issue of the intolerance towards anyone who isn't exactly like you. There are lots of reasons for it, but it really affects whether people can actually work together. Either you accept working with someone who thinks differently, or you don't. I'm much more interested in taking ideas from different people. I don't need another hero. Do you know the exchange between Butler and Fraser about redistribution and recognition? They disagreed, but in the end the interesting thing for me was that it wasn't one or the other. It was both. It always depends on the context, what you're trying to achieve, the conditions,

the people involved. I remember there was this Marxist feminist congress where they rejected that division altogether. They were saying, "It's capitalism *and* patriarchy," not one or the other. They refused those binaries. You're always negotiating different things depending on the context, what you're trying to achieve, how oppressed you are, what the conditions are. I don't need to agree with everything Judith Butler says, or everything Nancy Fraser says. I can take something useful from one, something useful from the other.

BB: Yeah. It's just not true to life, either, the idea of the battle of ideas and one person triumphs. You also never arrive somewhere bringing only one thing. Depends what you're carrying that day, what the situation is asking of you.

A: Exactly. I remember this quote from Rosi Braidotti's "Nomadic Subjects." She says something like, you can't get rid of an identity that never belonged to you in the first place. First you have to take possession of that identity, then maybe you can get rid of it. That's what happened in the women's movement in the sixties and seventies. Women came together separately because they said, "We've been told what it means to be women. We don't even know what that means for ourselves." So they had to build consciousness. They had to discover themselves politically before they could move beyond gender.

You have said politics is intervention. The question becomes: how do we intervene inside our own groups? How do we refuse ways of thinking about power or group dynamics that we think are destructive, while still staying in relation?

BB: Yeah. Connects to me about things like race and gender being both social constructs and social facts. They're constructed, but that doesn't mean they don't materially organise the world we actually live in, the death machine that's all around us. The pessimism inherent in pushing these things as concrete and unmoveable, essentialising I find really scary and hopeless. You can't obviously just decide not to see them because this whole world is structured through them, but you also don't have to act like they're inherent realities. You walk into a room in Berlin and have to ask, "Okay, how do I actually practise these politics here?" I've tried the opposite as well. Just nodding along to positions I fundamentally disagree with because I didn't want to make things difficult or speak up or honestly be

targeted as a phobist or some kind because I took a different tac. I don't think that's the answer. You have said politics is intervention. The question becomes: how do we intervene inside our own groups? How do we refuse ways of thinking about power or group dynamics that we think are destructive, while still staying in relation?

A: I totally agree. How do we create room to produce something together, instead of just making room for everyone's individual opinion and identity? If there isn't a collective frame, then there isn't really a group. A group isn't just a sum of individual expressions. It's something else. It's people thinking together. If you don't think together, there isn't really a group.

BB: Where do we put that on this diagram? "A group is not the sum of individual expressions."

A: I think there's a really common dynamic where everyone begins by saying, "This is my position. This is who I am. These are my standards." Then it's, "On the basis of these standards I'm not going to talk to this person, or work with that person." It's like... that isn't the important thing. We don't even know yet what the collective standards are because we haven't created them. Let's first see what we actually achieve together! I don't know, there has to be some way of moderating that tendency. It really makes me nervous when everything starts from fixed positions, because then there's nowhere else to go. If you've already decided everything, there's no room for doubt or questioning. It's like, "Go away, think through your ideology, then come back." No. I want to shake my ideology. I want to question it. I don't want to think I already know everything. That's ridiculous. It's boring.

BB: I think coming from fear and insecurity about your own political position can lead to that. You lean back on, "Well, at least this is my identity, this is who I am. At least that can't be questioned." Then, when you spend time in different kinds of groups where it's about politics and debate, it's like breathing fresh air. Suddenly there's room for disagreement between different identities and conflict doesn't collapse into claims and counterclaims of discrimination. People are actually working with ideas. They say, "I think this," "I think that," and because nobody's claiming authority on the basis of who they are, the political discussion can go much further. When disagreement isn't experienced as somebody saying, "You don't exist," it's kind of wild how it changes everything. And, like I really want to know how other people see the world. Obviously I can only ever see it through my own eyes.

A: For me it's established opinions and established ideologies. I usually use the word ideology in quite a negative way. There's no room to actually see reality anymore. You only see what's happening through those fixed words. When you make space for people who maybe have never thought about these problems before, or who don't come from an activist background, then you can compare perspectives. You see their reactions. It's much fresher. Then you can check whether what you think still makes sense, or whether it's just become something that's been circulating between the same people for years.

BB: Definitely. When you talk about these kinds of problems with people who aren't involved in political groups, they often just look at you and go, "...What?"

A: Sometimes I think that's really useful. It's like, okay... maybe we've become a little bit mad. Maybe we need to come back down to earth and ask, "Is this actually reasonable?" I really like (sometimes) talking to people who aren't immersed in this language all the time. Not because they don't understand collective dynamics. Everybody has collective dynamics. At work, in a football club, in a family, community garden, wherever. People aren't stupid. They know how groups work! We are always in them. Sometimes stepping outside these very established political languages lets you see the limits of what has become normal inside them. It opens up the possibility of actually listening to each other again.

BB: That feels like a good place to take a break. Sorry, I didn't bring any lunch.

A: That's okay. Are you hungry?

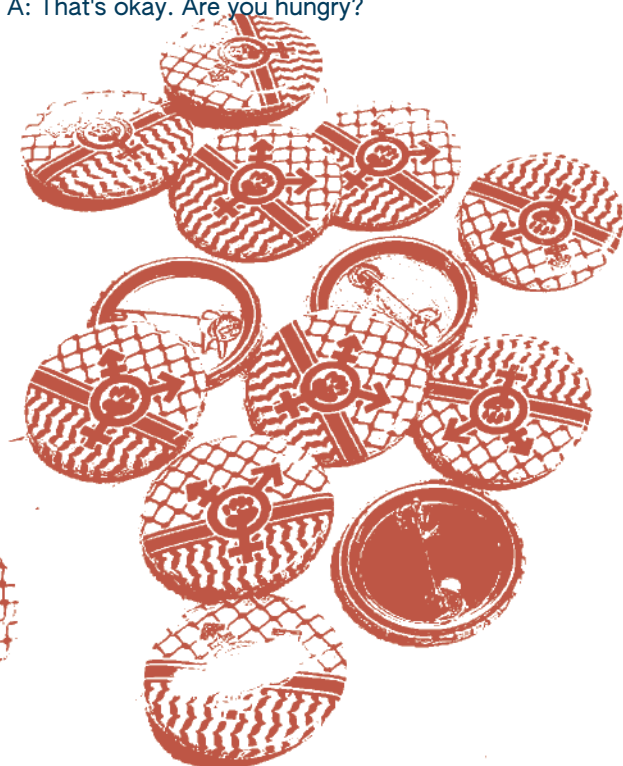
Hold Me (Accountable?)

I came into my first group organising settings via DIY punk, scenes always riven with accusations and schisms, a gravitational pull of tearing each other apart over perceived slights, beefs, scene disrespects.

If there was something you did, it was taking a position. I experienced a fair amount of behaviours on the knotty side of non-consensual, as did nearly every girl I knew. We were chewed up and treated badly, I tried in ways commensurate with the times to rebuild my sense of self around being taken seriously: which meant writing and starting to play in bands myself. I began to become politically active outside of cul-de-sac subcultures breathing in the fumes from a gargantuan cover up of sexual and domestic abuse in a legacy UK leftwing organisation, a party, wherein panic and ego and the cultic whims of self-appointed kangaroo courts saw fit to brutalise and spit out women.

The reckonings and high profile shaking-offs that followed were often necessary. And yet I watched, also, amidst the din of claims and counterclaims, as movements develop a fatal allergy to nuance and discernment, became more interested in denunciation than building alternative approaches. I mean, we tweeted. I was doing, I am doing, feminist anti-violence work in frontline services at the time. In the rape crisis centre I saw up close how the criminal legal system makes a mockery of the human capacity to discern. Training social workers and solicitors in my job I realised the extent to which dehumanisation is baked in systemically. I came to believe with all my bones that justice is a kaleidoscope (per Clare McGlynn and Nicole Westmarland's beautiful work on this topic) and that the truth is a precious alloy, which is to say rarely one thing.

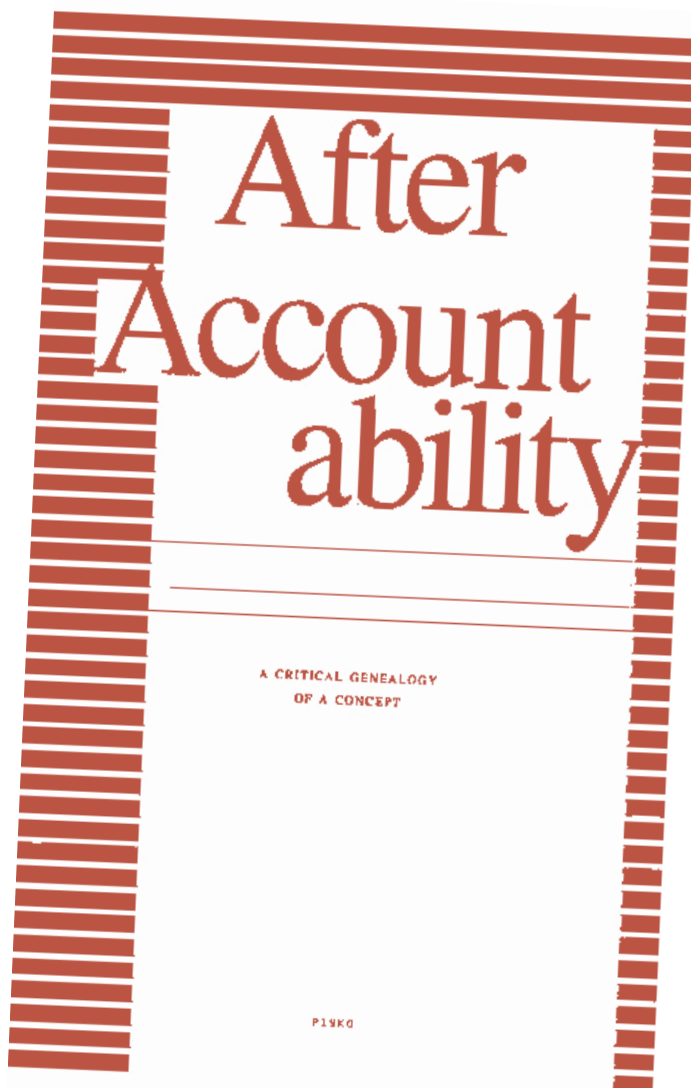
Enter: Accountability. Close up interactions with what happens after gender-based violence plus becoming more skilled as a facilitator plunged me into this world, which is built on the easy-to-agree-with idea that human beings are not disposable even when they have used violence, and the harder-to-enact idea that there has to be a way back, or rather a way through, towards healing and justice outside of the state after harm and even abuse have taken place in our. I began doing these practices with and for my music milieu, inside and outside of our social centre spaces, trying to blend what I had learnt in frontline services with what I knew to be true about non-shamed based approaches. There were successes, there were failures, there was spirited utopianism I can't help but chuckle at now, and there were



moments of profound connection, there were tiny personal revolutions, silent de-escalations that might have saved lives even though we'd never say that out loud. There were monumental fuck ups, lessons so hard they still cut now, and heartaches.

In my today-life, twenty years later, I encounter ever more intensive and poisonous versions of the same social technologies we were acting against. When bad behaviour is named and surfaces: there is panic, like it might be a zombie virus. Distance or deny, disclaim, defer, delete. What makes this harder to countenance has been seeing that this tendency is often no different amongst milieus of actively embattled activists where the wider stakes include pretrial detention, battering rams through front doors, and the criminalisation of any form of dissent. These asocial approaches rear their heads even in the moments where the need to turn toward each other, despite our trespasses, would seem more essential than ever.

Critical Genealogy of a Concept



This book is a rich oral history with american organisers and practitioners published by the Pinko Collective in 2021, presenting as many new questions as they answered. One takeaway I'd long suspected but always resisted slightly for its implications, is that the development of of transformative justice and community accountability in the US context at least, happened with both feet inside academia and non-profit world. Neither good nor bad per se, but is worth being honest about, and feels relevant and worth considering for anyone wondering why a lot of the tools in play (many of which I myself use when I am asked to support situations) have more than a touch of the Human Resources manager about them...

I am always ready to be seduced by any ready-made inheritance of loving militancy where everyone is also always kind and fair to each other, it's nice to dream there is a single path we strayed from that we merely need to find again. The interviewers search for this in vain, asking how conflict was approached by previous generations in more structured organisations, hunting for some other potentially more robust approach which we might pull on. They looked for a single verdict on Maoist and Maodjacent 'criticism-self-criticism' approaches but mostly did not find one. Instead, they heard that crit/self-crit could also led to the same 'psychological mangling' that Jo Freeman recounts in 'Trashing.'

Another tendency that the editors critique is the common romanticised foregrounding of an always vaguely invoked 'Indigenous knowledge' when talking about non-punitive approaches, as if there is some almost sacred 'source,' which at its extreme end they liken to 'playing Indian.' The idea of indigeneity as somehow 'uncorrupted', more primitive and thus 'pure' is itself of course a strain of weirdly dehumanizing colonial campfire fantasies. I thought of learning I was so generously offered living on gadigal land, where First Nations organisers spoke a lot about how temporary exile or banishment were absolutely part of some of the oldways of their justice-doing. Yes credit and acknowledging lineages is essential. And (!) you also remain you, now.

On a different tip entirely, I favour excising the 'woo-woo' dimension that often gets inserted into a lot of the framework and commentary on this grinding, thankless and deeply necessary work, as part of accepting that we are (in the words of Shira Hassan and Mariame Kaba) 'fumbling towards repair' without the comforting fantasy of any ancient map. Ultimately, this book's a reminder that its always worth interrogating how true something is vs. how comforting it feels. We might just

learn something.

A: Another very misused concept is transformative justice. You need conditions for that to happen. If there isn't a commitment to really change something, it's purely performative. We're pretending we're not punishing people, so we spend months or years in a process that produces absolutely nothing. Because there was never the basic condition to open a transformative justice process, which is that the people involved are actually committed to it.

BB: I've also seen a narrative develop around pathologising people, which feels part of this general tendency toward diagnosis, but rather than for empowerment, it is for placing them outside the circle of 'recoverable.'

So it's "Of course we believe in transformative justice and accountability... except this person just so happens to be a narcissist, so they are actively dangerous and we have to simply expel them for everyone's safety." Then suddenly it's like, "Sorry, I'd love to support you to become a better person but sadly you've got an unhealable personality defect. So Ciao." Everyone becomes a doctor and a social worker with the power to sever not just the ties that bind them, but those that might be fundamental to others, or based on a totally different risk assessment.

Instead, people will make ever more niche loopholes to find politically expedient ways of disposing of their comrades.

A: Too often there is no possibility of sitting down together to negotiate across subjectivities. The fact that someone sees something differently doesn't cancel out your point of view. In conflict, of course there are going to be different opinions.

BB: For sure, and in my experience doing that work, even when power differentials are involved, there can be different experiences of impact and intent.

A: Yes, and If you don't accept that, there is also no possibility of any kind of justice.

BB: That's a useful paradox. Everyone wants so-called accountability, even if they won't define it. Everyone wants transformation, we're so, so hungry for it. But we're probably the most atomised we've ever, ever been, in terms of the individual subject. So we're like religiously trying to do these collective practices while none of the internal conditions are there for them.

A: That's why I keep coming back to your idea of big system and little system confusion. Of course these are systemic problems. But whatever you're experiencing is always a mix of structural conditions and feelings. If people end up believing their feelings are the only thing they can trust in the world, it's understandable, but it creates another problem.

BB: A terminal lack of curiosity. I'm trying to find a way to talk about care that doesn't sound nasty, because what I'm really trying to get at is the structural lack of care. We make demands of each other as though we can solve each other's problems by putting ourselves aside entirely, when sometimes the caring thing is helping someone find a therapist, or organising against the system that makes it so, so hard, not trying to become their therapist.

A: We cannot address every single collective, global, individual and psychological problem inside every group. We all have dramas. We all have backgrounds. We need limits because otherwise it's impossible. We increase the frustration because someone will always say, "Yeah, but you have to take into consideration that this person is..." Everyone's trauma can't become the compass for the group because then, what are we doing? We have to be more honest at the beginning. Like this friend in Italy told me, maybe we should say on joining a group, "I'm here because..." Somehow make things explicit. Not everybody has to unpack their whole life story, but we need some rules. We can't address everything. Let's focus on listening. There is a time for everything. There are things that only arrive after practising together. You cannot do everything in the second week or the second month. Otherwise it's like, what are we here for? It's not trauma therapy.

BB: There has to be a frame. You need enough room for people to be human, but also enough boundaries that the group can actually function.

A: Yeah. I was thinking about that because yesterday we closed the campaign in Madrid. We reached the fundraising target and everybody was happy. We're only halfway through and it's been really difficult because we weren't in the conditions to do it. The group was weak. Sometimes even it was heartbreaking, with little tensions. But at the same time it was like, okay, this is what it is. We have to do it. So we suffered, but we did it. We kept the minimum together because we've known each other for a very long time. I have a conflict with someone that I still don't really know how to address, but that's another thing. I texted a friend few weeks

“The enemy is war.

Everything else is just questions.

The challenge is to stay together; the difficulty lies in sharing our lives when we don't know what binds us together.”



ago saying, "I know you're not having the best time, but I'm also pretty fucked up." Yesterday I sent him a short message saying, "I hope you enjoy today. It's going to be okay." Then today he replied saying something really beautiful. He said that everything we could move was because of the unconditional trust we have. That "there are people who follow what you propose because they trust you." Just hearing that... It is a gesture of..it means "be sure we're going to do it"

BB: It's a more practical way of showing care. I feel really alienated by these newer cultures around care, where someone's approach is like, "Hey, just doing a care check-in," and I'm like, what are you talking about that literally means nothing to me. It sounds like you got it from the internet! Even "How are you?" feels much more human. What your friend did is completely different because it's a contextual reassurance and reinscribing your value, plus rooted in something you've actually shared together. It's a built practice, but it's not fake.

A: Yeah. It's built because you know each other. That's completely different.

BB: It's a tangent, but related, I have a lot of close straight male friends and there's this potentially gen-

dered thing sometimes where, when they make that effort to reach out and show me some care and sometimes it's a bit awkward, I value it immensely almost because I know it's beyond their comfort zone. I know the bar shouldn't be so low, but when they push through clumsily and try, it's beautiful. I wish more of them did it! But even so. Even so.

Social media and the lost art of critical support

How do we historicise the changes in social norms, the forever debates and fatwas of appropriate and inappropriate language, call-outs and messy reckonings, across the last fifteen years? In moments lived largely online, everything is available, yet everything is forgotten. What is the affective toll of the discourse wars?

In an essay from 2014 titled "We are all Very Anxious: Six Theses on Anxiety and Why It is Effectively Preventing Militancy" the group who wrote it (Plan C) is speaking about the connection between austerity culture in the UK, and the dominant 'affect' of anxiety and early social media.

They wrote:

“IN THIS INCREASINGLY SECURITISED AND VISIBLE FIELD, WE ARE COMMANDED TO COMMUNICATE. THE INCOMMUNICABLE IS EXCLUDED. SINCE EVERYONE IS DISPOSABLE, THE SYSTEM HOLDS THE THREAT OF FORCIBLY DELINKING ANYONE AT ANY TIME, IN A CONTEXT WHERE ALTERNATIVES ARE FORECLOSED IN ADVANCE, SO THAT FORCIBLE DELINKING ENTAILS DESOCIALISATION, LEADING TO AN ABSURD NON-CHOICE BETWEEN DESOCIALISED INCLUSION AND DESOCIALISED EXCLUSION. THIS THREAT IS MANIFESTED IN SMALL WAYS IN TODAY’S DISCIPLINARY PRACTICES – FROM “TIME-OUTS” AND INTERNET BANS, TO FIRINGS AND BENEFIT SANCTIONS – CULMINATING IN THE DRACONIAN FORMS OF SOLITARY CONFINEMENT FOUND IN PRISONS. SUCH REGIMES ARE THE ZERO DEGREE OF CONTROL-BY-ANXIETY: THE BREAKDOWN OF ALL THE COORDINATES OF CONNECTEDNESS IN A SETTING OF CONSTANT DANGER, IN ORDER TO PRODUCE A COLLAPSE OF PERSONALITY.”

I think about two texts other from the same era which jolted me into critically engaging with what social media was doing to the space between me and other people. Both became grounds for intense debate in ways that seem slightly quaint now (as does any text that talks about Twitter.) Mark Fisher posted his essay 'Exiting The Vampire Castle' in 2013, while Sarah Schulman published the book *Conflict is Not Abuse* in 2016. Schulman and Fisher both experiences some ...interesting consequences of being (mostly) right too early about everyone’s favourite drug. I remember well the people who IRL picketed Schulman’s tiny book tour, so tightly did they grip the emerging orthodoxies of that era, and marvelled at the levels of free time they had to inadvertently prove the entire thesis of the book. ('Beatings will continue until morale improves' &c.) I remember too, those who denounced Fisher online in the wake of his intervention. It felt like it was never going to stop. Both waves of outrage took place with the organised vigour ordinarily reserved for fascists.

As for me, I was an obsessive k-punk reader but remember finding his despair in the essay a little overblown, thinking at the time he might be taking the world of microblogging a little too seriously, but also scared to realise some of what he said already felt very true. Similarly I felt electrified by elements of *Conflict is Not*

Abuse, challenged in a productive way by the parts I didn’t agree with, the baby and bathwater in her rejection of certain feminist orthodoxes in e.g. how we understand domestic abuse. I could not totally connect her thesis around ‘this person didn’t text me back’ with ‘Israel is bombing Gaza’ as expressions of precisely the same tendency. Nonetheless, in elucidating conundrums which have only flared further since, and for their prescience, and the case-in-point around their reception, both texts are worth revisiting. I remember even the expectation to say whether you were pro or anti. Not the text or the input but the entire writer. Returning to both, I find myself with different and new reflections: no surprise. I have the feeling that we could have learnt, could learn still, so much faster if we got more practiced in ambivalence, the older verdict of ‘critical support’ which means to remain alive to what serves us, what resonates in an argument, and reflecting on or challenging the rest, instead of demanding absolute alignment or bust.

Almost ten years after Bifo wrote in “Thinking After Gaza”:

"BARBARIAN IS THE STATE IN WHICH WORDS CAN NO LONGER BE UNDERSTOOD OR COMMUNICATED. WHEN WORDS ARE NO LONGER A BOND, LAW IS NO LONGER MADE OUT OF WORDS, ONLY NATURE: THE ONLY LAW THAT MATTERS IS THE LAW OF THE STRONGEST. THE PREDATOR' LAW. BARBARISM, IN THIS SENSE, IS FEROCITY."

The challenge is still to try to understand. In an era of hyper-colonialism and semiocapitalism mediated by algorithms that are accepted as truth with quasi-religious fervour, understanding requires not losing sight of the human condition, our own and that of others.

In this age when we blindly hand over our data, trust, and credibility to algorithms designed for social control, it is worth noting that this text—if it has any merit at all—is the result of human experience and interaction and could in no way have been generated by AI.

A group cannot meet all needs or account for everyone’s traumas. We are indebted to the both/and of knowing when to recuse oneself. We can build trust through trial and error, which requires a politics in direct opposition to disposability. When you start to feel that you are carrying trauma, it’s time to break the cycle of helplessness. Sometimes you need to bang your fist on the table; at other times, make a passive protest

against the senselessness of internal strife. A little bit (or a lot) of humour helps. Let air into your lungs and your heart, don't let the silence become rancid in your lungs. Look for the flowers growing amongst the tar-mac. And avoid, at all costs, becoming a cynic.

My political life began in the global era, and the anti-globalization movement was our response. After a couple of intense years of counter-summits and massive assemblies some of us went our separate ways back to the "think local." I rooted myself in a territory of practices where we learned to explore forms of politics situated on collective struggles practices under the roof of social spaces expanded to the neighbourhood but also the metropole as ecosystem. It was a time to reclaim desire as a political force. Despite all the harm and hardness, separations and failures, it is a collective memory that every different subjectivity defends as their own, and that is a sign.

It was around that time that I first heard about Jo Freeman's Tyranny*... I didn't read it then. It was also a time when I had to take a stand, and there was a bias in the way I heard about it, so I simply assumed we were on the right side of the conflict... because, yes, I inherited a lot of unresolved conflicts, and I sometimes paid a high price for them.

In the early years at the beginning of the millennium there was not so much attention on group dynamics and micropolitics and there where a big gap with feminist practices (some of us we were trying to move between both, drowning sometimes in the troubled waters) It was years after, when we started a new space adventure (with quite bad initial conditions and a patent collective weakness), a negotiated place, that we explicitly started to work on group dynamics, mediation, learning models of collective structures, micropolitics, etc, we had a specific working group dedicated to that topic. We thought, learned and produced a lot on the topic, but we failed completely to implement it on the space though, devastated by many dysfunctional collective behaviours mentioned in this document.

But I learnt that a group is a system that provides the possibility to become capable of transforming (one self and the outside) and that to make it possible, a group needs to create its own techniques (and rules). I have since then the tendency to observe and sometimes become a crow, a grace, a dragon, a snake or a spider... (following the roles described by Starhawk) and that there are too many roles to carry them on alone,

so we need others, we always need the others. I still claim the joy of the power of togetherness, I refuse though, the suffering and hardness it has crystallized sometimes around what is considered political.

"We're not going to radically transform the world by caring for one another, but we might be better equipped to do so - or at least get thru the day - which given that communism is thus far eternally a vision of tomorrow, is arguably step one."

Leijia Hanrahan
February 2020.

In the spring 2021 I visited for the first time the ex psychiatric hospital of Trieste, invited by a friend who was then working on the Documentation Center (a kind of archive of the Basaglia movement) of the place. I was fascinated, "a revolutionary place" I thought, exactly for the reason that they were permanently practicing their own thesis: there are rules but no doors, a city of cure is a city that provides material living conditions for everyone, there were a radical sense of equality that made hard to distinguish professional workers from users, because there are not such a thing as "normal". At that moment, after meeting the theatre group, the improv music group, and different self organized workers cooperatives...i had the thoughts "This is like what a social center promotes, but with the mental health professionals that we always needed!"

*The last time was here in Berlin, recently, this text was mentioned by someone to dismantle a critic...and oddly enough I would say followed the same pattern (male dominance on ways of doing about the political agenda of the group) Joreen, you're still relevant!

Leijia, or Life without Buildings:

It is a hot afternoon. I put Red Therapy back in the box at Mayday Rooms and set off to wander through London, where I no longer live but sits on the short list of cities for which I do not need a map, to meet a couple of my wittiest girlfriends, who themselves have become friends. This is one of my favourite forms of triangulation, like discovering a new ice cream flavour. A trio is also a group. I notice that they have taken to bouncing off each other by doing a recurring bit about how they're both going to kill themselves. Each time they do it, it makes me grow quiet and have some stern but also loving feelings towards them both, as if I've found my niece playing with a lighter. This is not the affect I try to offer to my friends, even though I know joking about it is a protective factor, even though it's this brutally unliveable city and their shared sense of alienation here that is the real punchline. Even though.

Later that night I open my telephone when I should have been sleeping. Someone has reshared a quirky short-form video interview format where two people debate a topic. I've never been served this series by the algorithm before. They're talking about Luigi Mangioni and the ethics of killing the CEO of a healthcare company. I click in to read the comments before it's done. People are observing as I did how gentle the speaker is. Then, as the questioner pushes their point about it being hospitals not insurers that are the real problem, the respondent pauses, and says slowly "Well, my roommate had United Healthcare and they just constantly refused her coverage for her chronic pain until one day she filled a bag up with argon gas and put it over her head."

I realise from one comment that I have met the person who put the bag over their head. Her name was Leijia Hanrahan and she was from New York. I don't know why I am so taken aback to hear someone recount this description of how she took her own life. I realise afresh why it is considered gauche in some quarters to share methods, and why people resist that, too. I knew she had died, and I knew there was a poetry scholarship in her memory called the Scholarship for Communist Women Smokers, so her friends and family could keep her legacy alive. Before I can stop myself, I look up the properties of argon. I know only of neon signs. The ancient Greek ἀργόν, neuter singular form of ἀργός meaning 'lazy' or 'inactive' a reference to the fact that the element undergoes almost no chemical reactions. Attacks on linking.

Leijia and I met only once when I had just started working at Mayday Rooms back in 2015. A punk friend in the US had connected me with her as she was doing an MA in Urban Studies at UCL. She was writing about the feeling of London's financial district, also known as the Square Mile, a medieval haunt full of tall sharp glass and organised death dealers in suits, and wanted to interview people about it. We met outside the archive and took the short walk into the boundaries of the Square Mile that open up as Fleet Street turns into St. Pauls. I picked out some passageways to show off and Leijia recorded me trying to sound smart answering her questions. I remember now that I pretending to understand the distinction she encouraged me to notice, between the emotions engendered by the political analysis I had of the city, and the feelings that arose from the built environment itself. It occurs to me that she explained at one point, without talking down to me, the distinction between effect and affect. She showed me a door.

I close the short-form video, feeling like I have uncovered something I was already carrying. I click out of the Wikipedia entry and search for some of Leijia's writing. I find out that her friends are publishing a posthumous book of her writing. I read the searing work of this could-have-been comrade whose private pains I had not known, who had been thinking hard on the limits of care as a demand when we make it only interpersonally.

The love we can give each other cannot come at the expense of looking to a horizon, or without the demand that we get back what we are owed from this rotten world, and so much more besides. I think about the vertiginously high stakes of all the look-aftering, too, and who it is shouldered by. How the healthcare so desperately sought yet kept from her and so many millions every year by the murderous insurance industrial complex and its analogues was not the kind that could ever have been demanded from friends (who I am sure were her greatest lovers and supporters) but which requires instead the dismantling of the overarching killing structure. Its seizing. To pluralise that Diane di Prima line from Revolutionary Letter #1 from 1968.

THE STAKES ARE OURSELVES
WE HAVE NO OTHER RANSOM MONEY
NOTHING TO BREAK OR BARTER BUT OUR LIVES..

I wonder what Leijia, who was a very fine poet as well as being a revolutionary, thought of Diane. In light of time being a spiral with no start and no end, it strikes me I better go busy myself building the world where I'd be able to email her and ask.

(Un)ending: To the swamp, comrades

Hell is other people and communism is ecstasy. We have still to shape ourselves into the jigsaw pieces whose contours alone may look illogical and strange, but pieced together form a new image for the world.

Our meaning is together, in pain and pleasure, towards the horizon, or it is or nothing at all.

We can, we must, build a new interpersonal settlement, a new set of norms to serve us for the coming collapse, and beyond.

A & BB, August 2026, Berlin



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Available in full as a free download at:

<https://memoriapresente.net/group-dynamite>



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Let a hundred flowers
blossom!
Let a hundred schools
of thought contend!
Long-term co-existence
and mutual supervision!

Mao Zedong
"On the correct handling of
contradictions among the people"
1957



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