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Introduction

We¹ seek to understand policy² as a governance of expanded form—across specific industry, target or details of content—in development and application, consistently occupying a place at the forefront of contemporary social control. As a practice, policy attends to the conditions of survival, in increasingly finer increments, for any given populous within the hierarchies of neoliberal globalization. In other words, policy is made for everyone, but administered differentially. Like Foucault’s understanding of utilitarianism, that origin spring of the biopolitical, policy is flexible. Policy conforms to the shape-shifting malleability of design³, with any given doctrine attaching equally to the individual, the community or a globally constituted class of constituents. Our aim is to generate a host of production (theoretical, historical, creative, strategic) around the notion of policy as a form that, by virtue of its ubiquitous language, docile appearance and instrumentalization of us all, becomes difficult to delineate.

From prevention to participation

We position prevention and participation as the driving principles that policy claims as it oscillates from dark to light. Specifically, we are concerned with “policy [as] truth⁴” on an axis of (in)visibility, from prevention to participation. We in the arts and academia are often called upon in the engineering of policy, and so, we have the capacity to make this form legible. As the medium for contemporary “best practices”⁵ across government and industry, policy is governance in the interdisciplinary age: it is developed on “platforms of diverse expertise” (always in public, private and extra-governmental partnership) and can then be applied universally when deemed a standard, having been developed outside of sector-specific boundaries. This reflects the recessed yet still present role of the State today, as always in concert with unelected interest. Within policy’s organization of bodies in democratic pose, we seek to differentiate between self-fashioning and subjection. Our current understanding of, or our specific concern with, policy rests on four pillars.

1) Policy is concerned with reproduction: with control of the means for the maintenance and daily practice of life. As such, it works through rhetorics of livelihood and vitality, from prevention (safety/health) to participation (culture/community). And as such, it can oscillate through different registers of care: of an entire population or of the most specific group or party (one apartment complex, for example.) As Harney and Moten have put forward⁶, and as it is possible to see across policy, the current rationality instills precarity and risk, whether this means public health policy that imposes further dependency upon vulnerable populations⁷, or cultural policy that aids, through art, in the dispossession of public housing.⁸

2) Policy is an ‘interdisciplinary’ practice: employing a diversity of interests in its writing, seemingly with the intent of being relevant to an increasingly diversified population,

which distracts from its often highly targeted effects. “Interdisciplinary” work characterizes the current era. We are even writing this abstract in a cultural organization devoted to cross-discipline (in this case, of the arts) and cross-sector (employing the arts in society) work. It seems tantamount, as interdisciplinary practice continues to be heralded, to consider not only its fruitful gains, but how it employs the multiplication of difference into policy’s consensualist process. The all-inclusive framework of policy “naturalizes [new] forms of social domination.”⁹

3) Policy assumes a common good: it sets up an ideal environment for consensus because the means may be discussed, but the end is always already assumed. Policy can never be voted on, rather it is “worked out” or creatively developed by a manifold team of experts or diplomatic representatives (non elected representatives). The agreed upon end is framed in the strictest common sense.¹⁰ Staged within a tyranny of calculation: preventing violence, increasing access, economic growth or democratization of arts and culture.

4) Policy is an instrument of visibility: “a complex system of permissions and prohibitions, of presence and absence, punctuated alternately by apparitions and hysterical blindness.”¹¹ In the reading of the intersecting axes of prevention and participation, hypervisibility renders certain people invisible. Policy’s language of rights and recognition—that which supposedly facilitates a new “visibility” for the disenfranchised—produces subjugation, or perhaps more importantly, a new threshold for blindness in the maintenance of that subjugation.

A public instantiation

These are projections we’re making based on comparing our experiences in two seemingly disparate fields: public health and culture. Part of our method includes considering the forms and processes through which policy is generated: how it is written, as well as, how it comes to pass. Towards a consideration of policy forms, we have taken them up: in terms of how we have assembled our group of interlocutors and in relation to the public moment for this research in Spring 2015. We have “tapped” representatives we find relevant to this project, rather than releasing an open call, as opacity of election is tantamount to policy. We have not invited professional policymakers since the format is without a particular issue for a specific expertise to address, and we would rather not impose an unproductive dichotomy. Rather we have invited an ensemble of policy dissidents, either those who catalogue and pay tribute to its effects, or those who invoke policy within a Left theoretical tradition. We are interested in the space where theory and pragmatism challenge one another in the pursuit of common aims. The public instantiation of this project—in which the texts invitees produce will be discussed, presented (or both)—will consider the discursive, social and spatial conditions of policy generation. In lieu of an academic

form (symposia or conference) we will adopt the hybrid strategies used to generate policy. More information will be provided in the New Year about this public moment, however, as yet another uptake of policy form in this project: the circulation and working from documents may be in the absence of their original context and without their authors present.

Potential questions/considerations

If policy is a mode of governance, can it ever fail? Or must its failures always be read as if not intended... part of the overall calculation and therefore inextricable?

Harney and Moten understand policy as “the act of pronouncing others as incorrect.”¹² What are viable interventions into the development of policy? Or is it possible to create spaces for contestation?

Can we identify those most threatened by policy to discover why they are a threat to “positive” forms of control? How can we activate that threat?

Considering that policy celebrates diversity, how do we embrace difference without it becoming a means for justified harm? How can subjectivity or group identity be named as such without becoming a new avenue for control?

How can recognition be achieved without “visibility” as understood by policy?

How can the homophily of a discourse be broken, to include other experiences and work, without it being a colonizing or empty gesture?

How can we cultivate active and engaged citizenship without ‘participation’ as understood by policy?

Who is rendered invisible and who disappears as part of self-protection? What is it to be productively missing?

How can we produce spaces of “felt theory”: a place from which to understand our political and social conditions?

Thinking through the distinction between prevention vs. protection in policy: protection surrounds life and prevention refers to death. How are our births, lives and deaths made intelligible by the policy that surrounds us?

How do we build solidarity in issues that are differentially felt? What is the role of feelings in securing domination?

How do we distinguish between modes of self-fashioning and subjection—when policy regimes adhere so closely to lived realities and desires?

1. Karisa Senavitis and E. C. Feiss. We are copying Gibson and Graham here, as well as, Stefano Harney and Fred Moten.
2. We depart from Harney and Moten’s usage of the term in *The undercommons*, although are more concerned with attending to the specificities of its appearance. See: Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The undercommons: fugitive planning & black study*. Wivenhoe / New York / Port Watson: Minor Compositions, Autonomedia, 2013.
3. This excerpt from Parsons The New School for Design’s School of Design

- Strategies illustrates a common positioning by design: “We advance innovative approaches in design, business and education. In the evolving context of elites, services and ecosystems, we explore design as a capability and a strategy in the environmentally conscious practices of individuals, groups, communities and organizations.”
4. Depeche Mode “Policy of truth” (from the LP *Violator*, 1990) features the lyrics: “hide what you have to hide, and tell what you have to tell, you’ll see your problems multiplied, if you continually decide, to faithfully pursue, the policy of truth.”
 5. Wendy Brown, “Governmentality in the age of neoliberalism” part of the lecture series Digital Inflections from Pacific Centre for Technology and Culture, Victoria, BC, Canada, March 18, 2014. See: <http://pactac.net/2014/03/wendy-brown—governmentality-in-the-age-of-neoliberalism/> (accessed October 7, 2014)
 6. Harney and Moten, *The undercommons*, p74.
 7. Often global NGO policies require aid agencies to make choices against local self sufficiency. For one specific example see “The west’s peanut butter bias chokes Haiti’s attempt to feed itself,” *The Guardian*, 10, July 2014. See: <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014/jul/10/haiti-peanut-butter-food-aid-malnutrition> (accessed October 9, 2014)
 8. As can be seen in any number of cultural initiatives around the demolition of public housing in London in the years leading up to the 2012 Olympics. For one example see: <http://www.marktestateproject.com>
 9. Andrea Smith, “Captured by the state: The antiviolenence movement and the non-profit industrial complex,” Keynote speech, The 9th Annual Critical Race and Anti-Colonial Studies Conference: Compassion, Complicity and Conciliation. The Politics, Cultures and Economics of “Doing Good” from Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, June 6, 2009.
 10. Working with and against this assumption of common sense, Sadiya Hartman’s analysis of slave emancipation uses “common sense” to observe ways that blacks were worse off under freedom than during slavery. Sadiya V Hartman, *Scenes of subjection: terror, slavery, and self-making in nineteenth-century America*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997. p 13.
 11. Laura Kipnis “Feminism: the political conscience of postmodernism?” in *Universal Abandon? The Politics of Postmodernism*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1988, 158 – writing on visibility.
 12. Harney and Moten, *The undercommons*, p78.

Claire Pentecost
(interview)

Claire Pentecost, seeks to use art to politicize and create public knowledge around the production, distribution, and consumption of food. Her long term research project engages what Pentecost calls the "Public Amateur," whereby she enters specialized discourses in order to demystify them and intrude into techno-science's forms of knowledge production to make visible a series of relationships between corporations, public and private institutions, government agencies, and the everyday practices of consumers, producers, and citizens. She is a professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

E. C. FEISS— Can you talk about why you initially turned to food, and what about food was generative for your practice?

CLAIRE PENTECOST— Well, I had been doing work examining the institution and the structures of imagination that negotiate our relationship with the rest of the natural world. I was looking at zoos, natural history museums, wildlife parks, and the romance of the American aborigines. Creative Time invited me to submit a proposal about genetic engineering, which was changing our relationship to the rest of the natural world. I started looking into it around 1998, and I realized that everything was very promissory, like, "in the future, we'll do this, and this and ..." and we in the US were literally eating it. It had already been approved then. It was being used commercially. I started looking into the food system, and it's like a thread, there's no end to it. It was so complex and so opaque, and so controlled by a few big players. And it involved everything. Almost any issue, whether it's cultural diversity, international trade, our relationship to what we are doing to the environment, our energy, our transportation ... all of these things. I realized it was a great issue, because it's really inaccessible. In 1998 no one wanted to talk about it. They just thought it was too depressing. It made them feel powerless that they would learn about these awful things, and not know what to do about it. So, in that time, and since then, the whole scene has changed. People want to talk about it. It has many, many outlets and platforms for discussion and education.

ECF— One of the things you said -that it was already happening, that there wasn't a discussion: that's one of the things that we get from Policy. It presents itself perhaps as generated in a democratic government, but somehow, it's always already happening.

CP— I hadn't thought about policy – qua policy – before you asked me to think about it. Of course it's on a continuum with the law – with regulation – and the ways the law is interpreted and effectively realized. So, the way that it turns into something that affects our daily lives, a lot of it is extralegal. Something like genetic engineering in our food was submitted to a regulatory regime, and I'm not sure where we draw the line between regulation and policy. No one was quite sure what regime it fell under. Was it the Environmental Protection Agency, the USDA, the Department of Agriculture, or the FDA? And different aspects of it were purportedly being overseen by different agencies. But you don't divide up a genetically modified crop that way. You know, it has effects on the environment, and it has effects when we eat it, and it has effects on the economy.

So they approved it, and they did some very significant things. One was that they called it substantially equivalent to traditional breeding. So, that phrase, "substantially equivalent," meant that it didn't need any other kind of regulation. And they also called it GRAS, Generally Recognized as Safe. And this also meant that it didn't have to be subjected to certain protocols of scrutiny. And the FDA that was regulating in terms of our health didn't do their own research. They just reviewed research submitted by the corporations that wanted this approved. And of course this was an error of the kind of neo-liberal revolution that started with Thatcher and Reagan in the 1980s regulatory reticence. There's a video shot of George Bush Sr. touring a lab at Monsanto, and saying, "Regulations? See me? I'm the anti-regulation guy." And this was before these wonderful products were actually introduced to the market. So, they don't do their own research, and their own scientists reviewing the literature and making recommendations were ignored or repressed because a lot of them were actually much more cautious and suspicious of the kind of data that was being provided by the corporations. So, this is a case where policy is concerned, and you asked me about hierarchies, the privileging of industry, that policy is basically designed to support the goals of industry. When I first started looking into this, they did do a kind of an, "uh-oh ... this is getting out, and people are upset. We'll have a series of hearings. Public hearings."

A long time ago I was a community organizer, and the style of organizing I did was to use the kind of structures that were in place for citizen participation but really flood them with people. So if there was a hearing about a utility rate increase, something that is just very pro forma – or transport of nuclear waste through the city, or something like that – and no one really expected many people to show up, we would organize crowds of people to come in and testify. This kind of structure is an example of something that organizers and activists will often try to use, if nothing else, to generate publicity. And so, there was a series of hearings – there was one in Chicago I went to. There were strings of people testifying, or submitting comments publicly, orally. This is where I met all the people I would start to work with, who had been thinking about this. We made a grassroots organization out of

that – which suggests how something like a hearing, which otherwise is not gonna make any difference can serve a function of helping people who are oppositional find each other and share information and ultimately strategize. But this had come out of the newspaper because it was a trade issue. That was the first little news about our genetically modified agriculture, because Europe and Japan did not want our commodities. Which is just interesting because it's another example of how something like food – there's this long concatenation of places where it touches the field of like policy and law. It's the trade, and health, and environmental regulation, and then, it affects the practice of science.

ECF — “Generally Recognized as Safe.” These functions of expediency: Policy has certain forms, which are expedient, which basically function to bypass contestation of any kind.

One of the things we take from Harney and Moten is an anti-reform politics. A politics that doesn't believe in reform, because Policy is already open to what reform is. The notion of Policy as a form of bio-political governance that organizes populations, and so always has the same effect, which is to instill risk for the populations it addresses. In a sense, the notion of reform is a complicated one. Because on the one hand, you could have an effective reform which mitigates some of the risk and some of the effects of that policy. Like, you could have GMO food labels, right? But how much does that do? It then also comes to stand for a kind of transparency or how a stakeholder consultation perhaps worked, when we know that it hasn't. So, that's how we think of reform, and then we're trying to think of what would be an intervention into these processes, the processes of expediency that you're talking about.

CP — Yeah. I've heard these arguments a lot, on different topics. The reform versus what? is the question. Granted every so-called reform takes us to another level of problems that need to be solved I think of this more in terms of capitalism, the machinations of capitalism, versus governments. Of course, it's hard to draw a line between them. Our government exists, basically, to service elites, and their activities. There was this 1967 British comedy starring Peter Cook and Dudley Moore called *Bedazzled*. It's about this guy – some schmuck, you know – who runs into the devil, and he gets seven wishes. And so every time he makes a wish, there's something that he didn't specify, and the whole thing is flipped. So he technically gets his wish, but he finds himself in an impossible situation, right? Like, there's this object of his desire, this woman, and he's like, “I want to be alone with her on an island ...” da da da, whatever. And then, “ding!” he gets his wish. And they're both nuns in a super-strict convent. You know, so it's always something like that.

And I feel like this is the process of reform and change under capitalism, because it's so protean that it's like, “you wanted that? Okay, we'll give you that. But it's

gonna be like this.” And you never imagined the way that they could like deform your aims. And this is what Chiapello and Boltanski talk about. What we got from the aesthetic demands of the 60s was more individual expression, we got it in spades. But the social justice demands were jettisoned. Anyway, yes, reform is flawed, but the way I think about it is that we’re trying to change a culture. In the example of food, what are the values that dictate what decisions are made? Well, one is convenience, which is strictly because it’s servicing a precarious work situation, where everyone is just trying to get what they need every day so that they can do all this work. One of the things I’ve noticed with food is that nobody wants to be told what to eat. It’s a deep autonomy issue. And, you know, maybe one of the earliest fields of power struggle. And so, what we have to work towards is creating a demand for something different. Like my own eating habits, I started finding out all this stuff, but I couldn’t change my habits right away. It was a long, slow process because there’s all this attachment. And so ... how do we start to elucidate a vision of what is a good life based on completely different priorities?

ECF— We’re interested in the relationship of the visual, or the question of the visual in relationship to these processes. So I wondered if you thought about the relationship of these two realms of vision, in terms of these processes. Also because you’re someone who deals with images?

CP— It’s something I’ve thought about a lot, and not just in terms of transparency but the whole gesture of unveiling, which critiques of representation operated as, moved along through this gesture of unveiling, of exposing. And the problem is that’s what critique does. So you unpack: why are things the way they are? And who wins and who loses? That’s all very good and important, but it has a limit. You know, because you can get to the stage where you made the newspaper and you can dissect everything in there, and then you’re like, “and? I mean, it’s not that it’s not necessary; it’s just that it’s only a step.

And the thing is that it is seductive, because it can give you these gains. It can give you a sense of being on top of a kind of mask. Even this labeling issue with GMOs, I think both sides presume something about it and we don’t know if it’s going to happen. Like, the activists think that, “well, if we’d label it, people won’t buy it.” At least it’s a first step. And the people who are selling it think: “if we label it, it will scare people.” And it will undo all this strategy of “it’s just the same; why should it be labeled?” If you label it, it’s saying it’s distinct. But we don’t know if it would make any difference at this point, national use of labels could have no effect whatsoever. And so then you have to go much further. In November of 2013, I was in a public conversation in Montreal with a PR person who worked with Monsanto. It was a very rare event because they don’t want to have a conversation in public with their critics. It’s not in their interest. But this happened. It was called “bridging the gap” or

something like “getting beyond the polarized issues.” You know, “we’re gonna have this public conversation and we’re gonna get beyond the current impasse”

With me was a representative from Greenpeace, and on the side with the Monsanto representative was a scientist, who maintained that there’s no problem with the genetic modification of foods. And the thing is, the conversation has to go so deep, because there are all these scientists who say, “it’s fine, look, it’s just fine.” And then you have to get into a critique of science as a social phenomena, as one that is subject to economics, and a culture that affects certain kinds of conformity because if you step out of the line, you will not be doing science because you won’t get funding. You know, you’re doing some kind of science that nobody cares about. You know, like about the hermaphroditism in frogs, which is caused by endocrine-disrupting pesticides.

ECF— You keep talking about the word “culture.” You also were saying that culture is more subtle. And I was interested in your use of that term: how you conceive of subtly to this question of culture.

CP— I think part of what I’m talking about is sort of like Bourdieu’s idea of habitus. Humans make an environment within the environment that enables us to thrive, hopefully. And there are all these practices that reflect preference, desire, negotiation of need, appetite, sociality, and aesthetics, which is a category I refer to as very large. And these factors that we can kind of parse out determine the quality of our daily life, and how we negotiate both our needs, our surpluses, and our relations with each other and other life.

Something like food: Is it an expectation that you would cook your own food? Or is it an expectation that it serves all the needs of eating to constantly have someone else make your food? So that has to do with aesthetics, and a panoply of other considerations. There’s your labor, time, sociality.

ECF— The time is interesting because the other part of Harney and Moten’s text that we don’t talk about is planning. They juxtapose policy with planning. The notion of planning is what is done in the undercommons. Planning is like this ongoing process of communal decision-making; it doesn’t necessarily have a pattern.

CP— It’s not formalized.

ECF— No. Not formalized at all.

CP— When I read it, policy – this chapter, was not the one that grabbed me. But I’m glad to have my attention turned there. But at the same time I don’t know if I see it that way. So much is of course in the name of our safety, as you’ve pointed out. Food

safety. But it's very discretionary. Like, safety doesn't cover confined animal feeding operations, and all the threats that that poses to people's health, and animal health. But rather, it's more on a granular level: like inspection, like, I can't sell you food unless I have a permit and a certification. But there are all these informal economies in which people have benefits: like "I'm gonna have fried chicken and make some salads, and people are gonna come to my house and pay 5 dollars." It's like a rent party. Now, is that planned as a way for people to redistribute resources? Basically, it's a redistribution mechanism. I don't think it's planned. I think it's resourcefulness which is custom. You know?

KARISA SENAVITIS — But there's stuff you've been writing, too, that's going beyond custom. Like the idea of the soil-erg, is this future culture. And when you were speaking about the Monsanto experience and the scientist and his silo, I was imagining you being there, talking about the soil-erg.

CP — Yeah. One of the things we haven't talked about is imagination, and it's something that very much interests me. Can we make our imaginations supple, or flexible, and nimble? And because I think we do need to imagine things – as they could be different, from how they are now. You know – so that we're not confined to a rather grim set of alternatives. Because that's how things are often presented to us. Like, "oh, nice idea, but it's not practical." And so I guess I'm interested in, in my own work, what kind of imaginative excursions can we take, that then can shift our sense of what's possible. 'Cause I think that's something art can do: little shifts. We all walk around with this more or less unexamined sense of what's possible. To shift that frame a little bit, so that you have a sense, "well, it doesn't have to be like this." And it sounds utopian, but I think that utopia is actually something that exists in all of our heads. It's a kind of fantasy that is in the back of our heads, that's part of what we get up for in the morning. And if we're not really thinking about our own utopia, or one that we agree with other people about, we are living someone else's. Right now, most of us are living a neo-liberal utopia. Which is just disastrous. It does not contribute to our thriving.

So that's a digression, but I do think that it is relevant – I mean, you asked me about the soil-erg. I'm not really proposing that we make a currency out of soil. But what if we thought about all the different ways we could assign value, symbolize value? What would it change? What if we really did value healthy soil as much as we value oil petroleum. And then you start getting into all kinds of problematic questions. I'm not proposing it as a solution. But rather, a way to energize our ability to move to a different vantage point, and possibly different field of action.

ECF — What you're talking about makes complete sense, we do need to imagine other possibles. Your brain is produced by processes of some allegiance of governance

and capital, like, it's produced by the power relations that you live in, like, your understanding of possible? So, I think in their thought, like the closeness of – to what controls it, or what organizes it.

CP— But it's a reacting formation against. Even what it is a reaction formation against. You know, is informed by those things.

ECF— So, I guess I'm trying to get around this idea that it's not just about language. It's not just about language, but what else is it?

CP— No, I don't think it's just about language at all. But I also don't think – and correct me if I've misunderstood you, but it sounds like what you're saying is that we are so much a product of a certain set of relations, and we can never get far enough away from these things that have made us. Thinking like that, where does that take us?

ECF— Right. But I think that's what is so difficult to access.

KS— Like an undoing of yourself.

CP— Well, it's like a staggering gate. You know, like you're staggering between the things that have conditioned me, and then the parts of me that refuse that. Where do those come from? You know, it's sort of like this problem that used to come up in relation to Foucault. Like, the world that Foucault painted at a certain time disallowed the possibility of a Foucault. You know? If we were so produced through this discipline, and then through governmentality, etc, how do you account for being able to get outside of it and think it? Or ... do we think, "well, Foucault is really not so outside as we would like to think." Then he wasn't, in a lot of ways. Especially as we get further and further away from it, and we have critiques, like the feminist critique of Foucault. But that's what I mean by it's like staggering. It's a very uneven process. It's kind of spastic, it's not coordinated. Or it's like the Deleuze and Guattari's idea of deterritorialization. We find ways to deterritorialize from all these things that are familiar – the things that constitute your territory, but then you have to reterritorialize, because you can go too far. Because if you go too far, you're on your own. I mean, you depart from the social fabric.

And I'm not saying everything links – that everything in history led to progress. I'm very suspicious of all the things that have been called progress. Like ... women – I mean, for the huge, vast, majority of historical time, women were less than human. And somehow, I live in a time and place where I can think myself fully human. How did that happen?

ECF— And also, what is the governance of that? Freedom of that – of this very

real sense of change, or liberation? What organizes that, somehow? I keep thinking about, for example, that you can't separate feminism, second-wave feminism, from temporary work contracts. You can't. The rise of women into the workplace: I read this article about how the contemporary temp agency was created at that time for women who wanted to work. What we are trying to account for by using this notion of policy is a regime which allows us to think about ourselves as products of the history of the social movements of the mid-20th century.

CP— But we're both a product of the movements, their demands for change, and the status quo's response to that. You could also say the more flexible work schedule is also a product of the revolt against the company man, the rigidity of workplace reality. What came with the flexibility is precarity. Did it have to be that way? You can have flexibility without this degree of precarity. It won't serve the market in the same way. It would be a different social contract.

ECF— How do you see your work acting in relation to these questions – why did you take the route you took – because clearly it's a political act for you.

CP— I got tired of doing work that was exposing or unveiling. I wanted to do something more prefigurative.

I wanted to stop obsessing about the global industrial food system, and look at other ways of addressing it : I got into other kinds of farming, and inevitably, I got to soil. And that opened up a whole range of things, and I think at the same time personally I was eager for more material engagement with my work. Because it had been very discursive, all in images and in writing, and I got interested in the question of form. How do you take a research-based practice, and then transform it into something we might call art. The category of human activity is not the same as writing a paper or explaining something. It is another kind of communication, and another – it's just a whole other orientation. A lot of it circles around the question of form. You know, how do you either take an inherited form and change it, or borrow a form from a whole different realm of human activity, and invest it with something different than it would have in its original context.

ECF— We have been thinking about policy forms; that's one of our big questions. How these might be forms that aren't discursive only. Like the example of X:, policy form has an expedient quality, which functions to constitute and move policy along. But then how can we think of this form as material, as not only discursive?

KS— Such as the infrastructure that precedes the discursive qualities.

ECF— And the kinds of infrastructures that are made in policy processes. Tell her

one of the stories about working on public health policy within a global corporation. That's a good story.

KS— In the global public health policy I've been involved in, there are strategies where it's about the optics of the situation, so it might be a group of white men deciding on the specifics of the medical access but during the roll out they're creating opportunities for women and people of color to join them on stage, hold the microphone and participate in the announcement, and this actually takes the form of a "fireside chat" where there's a projection of a fire on the wall, and there are hundreds of people coming together from different parts of the organization for this event that is meant to have everyone feel like their voices are heard and considered. Everyone is seated in circle within a giant hotel party room, and they are served champagne and marshmallows on sticks to "roast" in the "fire." This was the situation that was orchestrated for people to ask questions and challenge the direction the company was planning to take, and you couldn't help but feel ridiculous. While I think the people who came up with idea really thought they were breaking down hierarchies and creating a more relaxed conversation the experience sent the message that nothing was really going to change from this one hour end of the day activity.

CP— No.

ECF— Yes!

ECF— We both had these surreal experiences where the policy processes we were involved in would have formal instantiations, that were part of its movement or functioning.

KS— There were these rooms for meetings called "global connects", where it's like Skype, but it's a really expensive form of video conferencing, so you feel like you're all at the same table together, but you're in different locations around the world. So these are part of the infrastructures that allow for policies to be formed and approved, by making the situations for interaction more affective, where you're feeling like you're really with somebody. Of course, you have to be part of an office or branch that's outfitted with one of these "global connect" rooms in order to be included in these dealings. So at the same time that a few are provided the feeling of being drawn closer together it's at the exclusion of more and more.

ECF— In my case, I started thinking about this question of form in terms of artistic form within the public art commissioning work that I was involved in: for example, at what point is an artistic form being used over and over again? One form was an artist going into a building, a senior center, for example, also a audio visual work – which is

interesting in relation to your discussion of wanting to move away from discursive art making.. But at what point does that artistic form become a policy itself? Because it's rolled out systemically.

CP— Some of that is the engagement of a form so effectively as to present a premature social consensus, or notion of inclusion. Your first example, about who gets to hold the mic and what kind of setting is provided for the presentation of Policy. And an attention to forms that facilitate certain processes. Also it's a whole territory in design. You know, like the office spaces that facilitate collaboration. One can then ask, "are these forms opportunities for intervention?" Do we give Policy a different kind of access or leverage point if we intervene?

KS— I am interested in this Monsanto meeting you mentioned. I was just interested in the conclusion of that, or what your takeaway from that was. Because that's also what we're trying to address with the symposium. This "bridging" situation: what actually came out of that? Or was it just a symbolic gesture?

CP— I can really only say what it did for me, which was that it clarified the different grounds or arenas in which the debate moves. There was one point at which Trish, the Monsanto rep, said: "well, we're not even talking about science anymore." And then this mandate to "stick to the science:" that becomes where the debate is located. It's just a very simple question, "is this gonna make us sick or not?" And then there is a corraling of scientific ideas, like evidence: "if it was making us sick, we'd see it." Well, why? How would we be seeing it? On the other hand, I kind of don't care about the science. Why do we have to have it?

The scientist, he was sitting next to me, and he was such a gentleman; he just didn't care. I mean, he was supporting Monsanto, and he said very conciliatory things. He leaned over to me, and said, "you know the Art Institute is one of my favorite museums?" Because you know, I teach at the school of the art museum. Just completely non-related stuff. In the audience, I don't think anybody's mind was changed. But for me, it did help me think through more of where is the debate?

Gillian Harkins and Erica R Meiners
(interview)

Dr. Gillian Harkins' areas of interest include twentieth and twenty-first century fiction, popular culture, contemporary cinema, law and literature, psychoanalysis, affect studies, mass incarceration, and higher education. She tends to teach narrative and visual forms such as short stories, novels, film, and television by situating their aesthetic functions within broader social, economic, and political conditions. She teaches at the University of Washington.

Dr. Erica R. Meiners' research interests in education policy include prison/school nexus, lesbian/gay/trans/queer lives and schools, poverty, immigration/undocumented students, alternative media in education, critical childhood studies. In justice movements and anti-prison organizing her interests are anti-racist feminisms, criminalization of undocumented communities, prison abolition and decarceration movements, sex offender registries and community notification laws, sexual and gender violence, militarism, restorative and transformative justice. Her methodologies are participatory action research, community-based organizing, qualitative research and feminist research methodologies and teaches at Northeastern Illinois University.

Together, Harkins and Meiners consider opportunities for new ways to engage abolition in relation to college in prison programs.

POLICY PEOPLE— We are interested in fugitive responses to Policy, rather than modes of reform. Your invocation of 'abolition' in your text, *Beyond Crisis: College in Prison though the Abolition Undercommons*, is the kind of thinking that inspired this project and fuels it. Can you speak to how you conceive of abolition in relation to response or strategy? What would the abolition of Policy be? We are thinking of Policy in terms of Moten/Harney's use of it, which refers to both 'actual' Policy, but also a particular regime of social control, which they summarize as the "act of pronouncing others as incorrect."

GILLIAN HARKINS— I really like the question of how one might “conceive of abolition in relation to response or strategy.” For me “conceive” registers natality – creation as well as labor – and figures thought in line with Arendt’s conception of work. It helps me to think about the gendered dimensions of abolition-as-conception, in particular the subtle (and not so subtle) ways gendered formations of race, class, and education inform the differentiation of abolitionist philosophy from its practice. To frame abolition as conception makes “response” a way of reposing unasked questions, rather than a reaction or rearguard defense opposed to more forward-thinking or avant-garde “strategy.” This reframing might in turn mobilize strategy beyond its familiar associations with militarism and State-defined battlegrounds. Otherwise the opposition between response and strategy will be reproduced to minimize radical conceptions of abolition, as we saw in mainstream media descriptions of the #BlackLivesMatter movement as more response than strategy. One thing I like about Moten and Harney’s difficult piece is that it reminds us that language, and the semiotic systems through which we participate in the material world, are part of the strategic – and without acknowledging and fighting for that, the politicized languages of Policy will define the struggle over and over again.

ERICA R. MEINERS— This is perhaps just rehashing Moten and Harney, but there are reasons why movements against our prison nation get locked into struggles around Policy. Policy matters – will people inside eat soy/sawdust loaves or be shackled while giving birth or be denied financial aid for college because of a drug related conviction? – these policies administer life and death. Yet the work to mobilize against or around these policies can reaffirm the punishing paradigms, legitimize the killing institutions. The line between engaging in liberal or “reform reform” that strengthens and expands the logic or power of the prison and “revolutionary reform work” (to use Karlene Faith’s terms) is often faint, dynamic and contextual. And yet, perhaps just *cruel optimism*, but I’d argue that struggles to build or dismantle policies *sometimes* produce other affects, sets of relationalities, movements, and communities that have little to do with the Policy.

PP— We think that Policy instills hierarchy – that as a discursive regime, it manifests as layered and unfolding social hierarchies through its organization of population. In the introduction of your text, you state: “we are often dissatisfied and at times dismayed by the prevailing frameworks used to rationalize and navigate [college in prison programs].” Can we understand “prevailing frameworks” as Policy? If the promise of education is used in both college and in prison as a means of incarceration (legitimatizing prisons, producing debt) how can solidarity be built when the experience is so vastly disparate?

ERM— Let’s start with the question of building solidarities: Perhaps this is not a

strong example, but naming people inside as *university students* creates an opening, yes problematic and temporary, to imagine other circuits of relationality. Claiming those in a prison education program as *students* forces a recalibration of the work done by the prison and the university to produce particular subjectivities. Yes, these temporal interruptions can be reinscribed, and with the increased interest in college in prison programs (as we note in *Lateral*) the identity of “incarcerated student” will undoubtedly be absorbed by prevailing (and racialized) criminal justice reform tropes that seek to protect/exonerate the innocent: the student/prisoner is more worthy, more innocent than the *real* prisoner. Even given this imminent absorption, for many audiences this is a temporal, contingent interruption that produces the possibility for imagining a line of solidarity previously unthinkable for some.

GH— Picking up on Erica’s comments, building solidarities must be contingent and adaptive. The prevailing frameworks change and adapt, as do relations between those frameworks and Policy. At this very moment, new interest in 2-year institutions at the level of Policy – exemplified by the Obama administration America’s College Promise initiative – dovetails with changing frameworks about the value of higher education for job preparation and humanist uplift. We need to keep track of the porous and semi-permeable relations between Policy and prevailing frameworks without collapsing them. On one hand, Policy is one of those systems whose institutional parameters appear relatively closed. This is what makes Policy an appealing forum for “strategic” approaches. On the other hand, regimes of social control are (seemingly) more malleable as open systems because they depend upon some level of consent to prevailing frameworks. Such regimes require deeply stratified and non-homogeneous networks of common sense so that consent, coercion and domination can co-exist without seeming to refer directly back to Policy. Policy and regimes of social control meet in various institutions that are charged with reproducing – through adaptation if necessary – prevailing frameworks that explain and legitimate a given social order. Universities and prisons are key institutions in this process, and exposing, analyzing, and “responding” to the relations amongst them is a key way to forge adaptive solidarities and relevant strategies.

PP— How would you characterize the work of Policy as a “positive” exclusionary force (again through the rhetoric of humanistic education) in college in prison programs? Who among the prisoner population is denied access to college in prison programs?

ERM— Where I work the prison generally disqualifies anyone convicted of a sex offense, people in protective custody, those identified as a “security risk” and anyone with active and known gang affiliations. These are ALL vague categories, defined by the prison/criminal legal system, and cannot be challenged. While the

prison is overwhelmingly full of poor and/or non-white people these restrictions disproportionately impact those who are actively organizing inside and are connected to others, particularly politically, queer people, and/or young Black and Brown men. Not surprisingly our program then replicates forms of exclusion and punishment produced by the carceral state.

Of course our universities do the same, also exclude, through policies and prevailing frameworks that are overlapping and also dissimilar (“merit”). Those marked “less than” in college and university are denied access to symbolic and material forms of capital that shape the “best of” life pathways: programs, financial aid, internships (the list is endless). The impact of these policies and institutional norms in an education program in a prison is perhaps more nakedly coercive and exclusionary than the site of the university, but this is arguable.

GH— Agreed about the above, although my specific situation differs in the details, as they all do ... which causes significant problems for collective organizing across regions. Nationally, there is wide variation in how each region negotiates federal Policy (such as Pell Grant restrictions for currently incarcerated students), state Policy (in Washington we have a legislative ban on public money for degree-granting higher education inside prisons), Department of Corrections Policy (at the levels of state legislation, state-wide DOC administration, and facility-specific DOC administration), and college/university Policy (in Washington community colleges have specific contracts with DOC to offer GED and vocational classes, which must abide by DOC eligibility restrictions for student enrollment as Erica describes above including low or excluded status for undocumented people). Independent higher education in prison programs may be able to set their own admission and eligibility procedures within general DOC Policy restrictions (placed on Volunteer programs) rather than educational DOC Policy restrictions (eligibility for DOC contract college programs), but then in turn they must negotiate college/university Policy regarding admissions (admission and eligibility requirements that in the Common Core Application includes felony and disciplinary history boxes) and decisions about if and how to matriculate currently incarcerated students in standard credit bearing courses. Overall, Policy is both ever-present and elusive as a site of direct action. In Washington state, for example, proposed 2015 legislation would allow public money for higher education in prison while placing DOC in charge of eligibility for admission to programs funded by that money: what kind of strategy does such legislation set in motion? Is there room for other modes of response once legislation is introduced?

PP— Your critique of the “humanistic value” of the humanities and liberal arts is particularly relevant to our work and this project. Your essay criticizes the idea that “the world may be in economic crisis, but the humanities and liberal arts are there to resolve that crisis and direct the public toward a more integrated, holistic approach

to the ‘human’ in human capital.” How would you think this in relation to Policy? Is Policy what sets the register and promotes the values at stake? Where does Policy intervene in the production of human capital, in the prison context?

GH— That’s a big question. I guess trying to understand how humanistic value pertains to human capital pushes us to rethink how the humanities pertains to humanitarianism and Policy about human rights and labor protections. The question remains what humanisms will emerge from these conjunctures and what power relations will be institutionalized as Policy through them. Erica and I used the phrase “white ladies bountiful” to signal one specific formation where prison-focused volunteerism can slip into a humanizing love familiar from feminized and racialized humanitarianisms (contra the “white man’s burden”). The problem lies in how gender, race, class and educational attainment shape the conditions through which work becomes legible as activism (political), wage labor (professional) or labor of love (volunteer). While this three-tiered system is easy to identify and call out, it is harder to resolve without transforming how Policy and frameworks intersect institutionally.

In the case of college in prison programs, Policy and frameworks institute divisions of humanity through competing and contradictory systems of value. College/university systems have their own hierarchies of value situating work across these three tiers (political, professional, volunteer), and people from educational institutions negotiate their relations to prison institutions in ways that do not necessarily map neatly onto their college/university role. Incarcerated students negotiate these roles in a differential system imposed by DOC Policy and are often pressed to perform various embodiments of human value rather than participate in systems of valorization as political, professional, or voluntary agents. If all modes of work were factored into this equation, students-as-workers would have to include those incarcerated students who do quasi-paid labor inside to produce the furniture for campus (in Washington state institutions must purchase at least 1% of their goods from DOC labor contracts while LFOs and other debt structures generate revenue from incarcerated people through an intersecting but differential production and finance system). In this context, the classroom seems poised to raise fundamental questions about labor and value in institutional life, connecting to union activities on campus and anti-sweatshop and divestment campaigns connecting campus labor, international relations of production, and financial investment portfolios. This might precipitate new frameworks for human value that would require abolition across college and prison sites. While many program participants can see how abolition relates to the prison, fewer participants conceive of abolition as a collective practice that challenges the political, professional, and volunteer tier system routed through the university/college. All too often these roles just play out in ways that affirm the existing college/university system. And this behavior can actually exacerbate negative effects on campus, including naturalizing eligibility and admissions procedures for campus matriculation, devaluing non-paid

labor as “service,” exploiting adjunct labor and other class-stratified wage work, and rewarding “professional” valor in the face of adversity (what Sora Han glossing Moten and Harney calls professional negligence).

ERM— Gillian’s point is so central, I don’t want it to get buried. I am railing against the near impossibility of mobilizations around the labor attached to organizing and teaching inside a prison for people the state considers men. In my work cisgendered queer (not all white) women are the bodies readily available (via a range of historical, affective and other ongoing forces) to teach inside for free. We can and do get cleared, navigate the prison and submit – all women must wear “real” bras. Our complicity in the erasure of this as gendered labor, as *queer* work, seemingly reinforces the heteronormative site of the prison (and the university), extends the work of the university through our unpaid “care,” and, again, hetero-genders and racializes the civilizing project of education. And this, of course, is an old story in the US. While, as noted, Gillian and I don’t see white ladies bountiful as a form of fugitivity, an engagement with this figure – what she forecloses and makes possible in this institutional relay between the university and the prisons – seems both crucial and in need of displacement for any abolition future. Yet even raising this as a critique places our bodies (and our laboring sisters, so to speak), under the bus, and for what? For whom?

PP— What would be a radical response to Policy? Because Policy speaks in the language of “participation” and “prevention,” under the pretense of care (as Harney and Moten put it: “hope appears now simply to be a matter of policy”) what kind of response indicts Policy whilst not denying that which it amends? We are thinking this also in relation to your discussion of critique: “Publishing critique of this phenomena threatens to exacerbate the general problem of professional university critique.” What happens then when vocabularies/languages of academia, administration, critique are mingled? What does the hybrid offer and diminish?

ERM— A decade ago restorative justice was a radical opposing force and set of analytic tools and today the Chicago Police Department boasts of their restorative justice techniques and focus throughout their juvenile system. My Provost’s recent use of the term intersectionality was devoid of any association with power and was the new proxy for “diversity.” “Social justice” and “public engagement” at research universities emerges at a moment of deeply restricted access to enrollment and stark campus wage inequities. Locating their origins in movements that demanded redistribution, I try to recognize the genealogy of some these policies and frameworks – what they made possible and now simply reform – but also to note where and how these frames still have saliency, force—and these assessments are uneven, surprising sometimes.

Right now I am leaning away from work that has legislative or policy ends or seeks specifically to institution build or change. Perhaps it is a privilege not to, and I work alongside people who do think and act this way and I rely on their labor. I guess I feel burnt. I am paying attention to the mobilizations that can wrench other openings, create other networks and lines of analysis, fragmented or temporary, capable of informing resistances after the closure, the Policy. How to do this, without reproducing the same old prevailing frameworks? What might it mean to name education in prison projects as queer?

GH— What Erica said. Additionally, your question suggests that Policy names “participation” within its coercive logics, while Moten and Harney name “critique” as participation in the coercive logics of Academia. So you ask what hybrid “vocabularies/languages of academia, administration, critique” might intervene in these intersecting logics? I think the question here is how languages reflect and shape existing power relations. So I guess I’d ask: how do we hold people accountable for *collective learning* before they take action (whether participation or critique)? There are many different languages and frameworks used by people across contexts, yet there seems at times an unfamiliarity with – or even a lack of interest in learning about – other people’s languages and frameworks. Collective learning should center the language and frameworks developed by those most impacted by a system, and it should include diverse approaches to framing that system from multiple positions and perspectives. To use the example from the last question, divisions between political labor, wage labor, and labor of love have been rigorously analyzed by diverse feminist activists and scholars ... yet this framework is not a prevailing one in discussions of abolition. Is there a lack of familiarity with or undervaluing of feminist analyses of gendered/racialized labor in conceptions of abolition? What and whose ideas are valued and generalized as frameworks for action? We need to generate and share – collectivize – frameworks that enable feminist and queer conditions of abolition. Otherwise given the current hierarchies of institutionalized value we will be steered consistently toward models of production without reproduction, dialectics without desire, anti-racism without feminism, feminism without history, etc.

PP— You talk about drawing vocabularies from inside prisons. What is the pedagogy of prison? How can curriculums support the kinds of knowledge being generated collectively? How do they suppress it?

ERM— I find “carceral state” helpful to refer to how a punitive logic pervades institutions and systems that many perceive to be seemingly outside of the reach of prisons and policing: job training programs, health care, child and family services, schools and universities etc. Recognizing and naming the saturation of this punitive logic – in our classrooms, on our blocks, in our kinship networks – is pedagogical

work, is abolitionist labour. Institutions, “common sense” and as Gillian noted the grammar of our sentiment, normalize and attempt to disappear punishment, isolation, deprivation. This “pedagogy of the prison” shapes our everyday, *differentially by race/ability/gender/ and more*, beyond the site of the prison. This naming is particularly central as states, motivated by “fiscal crisis” move slowly toward decarceration. How can we anticipate forms of enclosure? Anti-blackness and gender coercion? The relative upsurge of education in prison programs at a moment of uneven but growing state support for decarceration provides an opportunity to trace shifting carceral logics and to recognize and potentially re-route these investments. Yes, I think curriculum can and does provide some tools for engagement (the programs most likely to incubate these environments, Ethnic Studies and Women’s and Gender Studies and American Studies, are also the most likely to be marginalized or eliminated in moments of fiscal “crises”) but I see openings in the key pedagogical value attached to how people collectivize and mobilize against the “prevailing frameworks” that scaffold policy formation and naturalization: grad student unionization/mobilizations, shit-ins for gender neutral bathrooms, organized challenges to “merit” initiatives or the narrowing of access to key programs and resources, etc.

GH— Again yes to what Erica said. One question, echoing Moten and Harney, is how pedagogy can create something other than naming. At the end of our Lateral piece, we listed “ongoing political education” for everyone involved as a goal for college in prison programs. When someone is moving in and out of diverse, interconnected, yet divergent institutional spaces, it seems inevitable that they would experience cognitive and affective disorientation. That seems like an excellent opportunity for pedagogy in a more robust, collaborative mode. But some people are, historically and institutionally, less likely to encounter that experience as pedagogical – a condition in which learning is appropriate, including recognizing one might have a paucity not of specific names but of listening and learning skills. Instead, for people who have been historically and institutionally positioned as dominant, the desire to name often overrides the reflex of learning. This can be exacerbated when the situation includes college professors interacting with students in prison, which can include desires to give affirmative or positive names (students as organic intellectuals, teachers as radical educators) to replace negative ones.

PP— A lot of your suggestions at the end emphasize “linking struggles.” This is exciting for us, especially as this project is about thinking the linked subjugations made possible by aligned Policy processes and implementations across industry. However, how can the linking of struggles “stay fugitive,” i.e., not offer itself up – *as a program* - to Policy?

GH— You know, I do not think making college in prison into a “program” is itself

a problem. That can be an effective negotiation of the terrain discussed here. Can educational programs emerge through grassroots mobilization and remain outside program-based professionalization (offering itself up to Policy)? Of course, popular education models continue to do this effectively. But it is hard to do this and interface with colleges/universities – which have accreditation processes and Policy-specific protocols – and prisons – which conversely may at times resist “professional” college more than non-accredited programs targeting self-improvement and skill-acquisition. The key is to create accountability with movement-building efforts beyond the program. The program itself may not be “fugitive” but its relations and effects can be.

ERM— This is a question for so many contexts not just the education/college/prison linkages! And yes and yes to Gillian’s point about the ongoing need to structure accountability to justice mobilizations beyond the prison and this necessitates invention. How to build relationships with outside organizations when the prison requires as a condition of teaching no contact with formerly or (other) currently incarcerated people or their family members? These conditions require creativity and thinking and organizing as a collective rather than an individual actor, helps. A grotesque generalization but collectivization, perhaps like listening and learning to others as Gillian noted, is not a skill valued or widely cultivated by our profession.

Dr. S. Ayesha Hameed teaches in the Department of Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths University of London. Her work explores contemporary borders and migration, critical race theory, Walter Benjamin, and visual cultures of the Black Atlantic. Her studio practice includes video and performance focused on sans-papiers organizing and migrant subjectivity.

PLAYLIST

from Harun Farocki and Antje Ehman's *Labour in a Single Shot*

Dario Schwartzstein, *Ultra Violet*, Buenos Aires 2013

<http://player.vimeo.com/video/66932166>

Maximo Ciambella, *Mate and Leather*, Buenos Aires 2013

<http://player.vimeo.com/video/67087569>

Mena el Shazly, *Coke Bottles*, Cairo 2012

<http://player.vimeo.com/video/58263789>

Nguyen Trinh Thi, *Weaving*, Hanoi 2013

<http://player.vimeo.com/video/76351590>

Daniel Ulacia, *Colocando*, Mexico City 2014

<http://player.vimeo.com/video/96478162>

Toshi Seeger *Afro-American Work Songs in a Texas Prison*, 1966

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wFSlw8LlIw0>

As a point of entry I want to start with the video “Weaving” made in Hanoi.

So what do we see? There is a loom in motion. The screen is divided horizontally. The machine, a complex architecture of joists and metal (Walter Benjamin’s dream materials of the nineteenth century) is in motion.

It’s a beautiful rusty old machine and it moves in a most elegant and pleasing way. It makes a sound, it looks like it is from another time – maybe even Benjamin’s.

Behind it, slowly revealed is the weaver, a woman who collects from this loom a tapey lace that she ravel into a ball. She is dressed in pink and white from head to

toe. It's a great outfit.

But somehow her dexterity and her role as captain of this loom is somehow not what the eye is directed to. What we are guided to look at instead are the exquisite joists and curves of the loom that dances almost of its own volition and in fact continues after she bows off stage.

What we see is a reversal – where the machine somehow is the agent, endowed with life, dancing around, doing its thing. The woman, in spite of her skill and cinematic quality, literally is behind the machine. It's a Grandevillian image if there ever was one, where the commodities come to life and take centre stage.

Or from another point of view she is *behind* the machine, as Franco Berardi states in *After the Future* his history of the end of the future:

Futurism exalted the machine as an external object, visible in the city landscape, but now the machine is inside us: we are no longer obsessed with the external machine; instead, the "info-machine" now intersects with the social nervous system, the "bio-machine" interacts with the genetic becoming of the human organism...

In the mechanical era the machine stood in front of the body, and changed human behaviour, enhancing their potency without changing their physical structure. The assembly line, for instance, although improving and increasing the productive power of laborers did not modify their physical organism nor introduce mutations inside their cognitive ability. Now the machine is no more in front of the body but inside it. Bodies and minds therefore cannot express and relate anymore without the technical support of the bio machine.

– Franco "Bifo" Berardi *After the Future* pp 14, 16

Bifo points out that Marinetti's Futurist Manifesto was published in 1909, the same year that Henry Ford initiated the first assembly line in Detroit. This is no coincidence, nor he states, is it a coincidence that the most fiery proponents of futurism were in the agrarian economies of Italy and Russia. The machine stood in front of the labourer paving the way to an industrial future. As we all might already know, Bifo says we are in a different time now. The machine is not in front of us, it is inside of us, and makes us anxious and depressed. Our souls are on the factory floor. The machine is not outside of us it is in us. We are sped up from the inside out at the pace of an accelerated capitalism.

But what if we stopped for a second and questioned the polarity of this distinction – the machine in front of us, as opposed to the machine inside of us. What if we blurred this distinction between the machine being inside or in front of the labourer? Or we found a threshold where the ambivalence of both modes of the bodily and the machinic coincided? Through these videos I want to consider two possible thresholds where the machine and the body meet in uneasy contrempts: in the gesture whose endpoint is the skin, and in the voice whose endpoint is singing.

Through these two thresholds – the gesture and the voice – I want to look at these videos anew. Not in any celebratory way, but as is. To think about the role of embodiment and the machine that straddle what Thomas Elsasser so eloquently describes: the knife’s edged constitution of labour as hovering between a recognition of its dignity and its dehumanization.

GESTURE

What I am thinking about in relation with the liminality of the gesture is in the very specific context of its relation to the machine and the labour process, where the gesture is only intelligible in its mediating role with the machine.

So in *Coke Bottles* shot in Cairo – we see two laboureres on screen tossing packages of coke bottles in a chain, from one to the other and then to another person offscreen. At first glance this sequence of gestures could be considered to be almost machinic in its synchronicity. And yet what destabilizes this most dramatically is the stumble, when the man closest to the camera moves too quickly and in his fumbling recovery, throws a crate to the side. He also pauses, he makes strange nods. The fumble does not throw him off, but maybe it throws us off as viewers. The glitch calls attention to the machine like nature of the tossing, but also the subjectivity of those making the gestures. The breaks in the rhythm make us aware of the rhythm itself.

Or in *Ultra Violet* shot in Buenos Aires, we hear what might be characterized as the industrialization of the voice of the horse racing announcer – it’s sped up quality just inside of the threshold of intelligibility. He sounds excited. But consider his voice in contrast with the comportment of his body. His voice is fast but his body is slow. He moves, picks up his binoculars almost absentmindedly, and points them to the screen rather than outside. He is operating at two temporal registers, where his slow relaxed gestures give us a glimpse of how habituated he is, how his attention can be there and elsewhere.

An attention to gesture also might take us to that of the camera person who is necessarily offscreen. When the camera is controlled, and does not call attention to the gesture of the cameraperson as it is in *Ultra Violet* the camera person hovers as both present and absent. When the camera is handheld as it is in the *Coke Bottles* or in *Mate and Leather*, its contingency parachutes us into the time and space of action.

I want to think about how at its limit the gesture and its relationship to the machine takes us to the skin through an example that takes us away from the videos for a moment. I want to segue to a history of fingerprints, the gestures and machines that produce them, and finally their destruction.

In 1858 William Herschel who was the Chief Magistrate of the Hooghly district was finalizing a contract with Rajyadhar Konai to purchase a binding material to build light roads. When Konai was about to sign the contract, Herschel was inspired to ask Konai to make a stamp of his hand on the contract by pressing his hand upon some ink and then making an imprint on the contract. Herschel had no thought of what this

mark looked like. Rather he wished to implicate Konai's hand and by extension his body into the contract through this gesture: "I was only wishing to frighten Konai out of all thought of repudiating his signature hereafter." His main intention was to frighten Konai into honouring the contract by marking him and using that mark to bind him to the contract.

Consider an afterlife of this gesture: the collecting of biometric information at a national or international scale. In India this is a "voluntary" system launched at a massive scale to create a national ID – for a population with a very high illiteracy rate and low income levels so that alternate forms of ID – passports or drivers licenses are not as common.

Or consider another afterlife, the EURODAC – the European database that collects the fingerprints of illegalized migrants entering the EU. The records of these prints are used to send migrants back to their first country of entry in order to be deported.

A huge deterrent for illegalized migrants in the EU is the requirement that they seek asylum in the first EU country that they been fingerprinted in. The threat of being deported back there, their first country of entry, is so unacceptable to many migrants that it became a common practice for them to attempt to erase their own fingerprints – by drinking chemicals and by burning off the skin on their fingertips.

And consider from this point of view the response and resistance to this database on the part of the migrant who destroys their fingerprints in order to evade detection in the eurodac database.

Consider then a still from Sylvain George's documentary film *Quils se reposent en revolt* that records this act. It is an image of the hands of a migrant who has attempted to burn his fingerprints off so that he can avoid identification. His hands then carries the imprint of the law and of his own journey. This act is painful and the trace it leaves is difficult to look at. And this is a sisyphian task as fingerprints always grow back.

But what is relevant in this instance to the distinction that I trace between the machine in front of the body and the machine in the body is the way in which this gesture is only intelligible as a response to the Eurodac, as a response to the machinic collection of this biometric data. The gesture of erasing the fingerprints and the trace it leaves is only painful and debilitating in the life of the migrant outside of this apparatus.

VOICE

The second site of liminality that I want to look at is that of the voice. We've already considered the fast voice of the horse racing commentator and his slow gestures.

But there are other voices too. There is the terrible pop music singing happening in *Mate and Leather*. There is the aazan or the call to prayer in *Coke Bottles*. There's the singing of the loom in weaving.

These are sounds that all the workers hear. These voices, like the industrialized voice of the horseracing commentator, operate at the threshold of intelligibility, not on account of their speed but on account of their dispersion across the space.

There is a collective listening, perhaps distractedly so. With the aazan, the call to prayer in Cairo, it signals dusk, the end of the working day. It is a collective experience shared to pace the day. It is also part of the massive sound pollution that permeates the city. You never hear it in isolation of other sounds in the city.

Then there's the Top 40 music that paces the working day of the workers in *Mate and Leather*. It paces the day and it paces their gestures, it paces their cutting of leather, it paces the passing of the vial of matte - the performance of another collective ritual.

These are shared sounds that form the collective experience of working, that pace the day and pace the gestures of work that I want to push further and radically, to one of the first moments of the dehumanization of labour under modernity – ie in the transportation of slaves across the Atlantic, and the putting of these enslaved people to work on plantations.

There is another set of sonics that comes out of this shared experience of dehumanization of labour that has its birth in the hold of the slaveship that Stefano Harney and Fred Moten describe as haptic. He says:

Never being on the right side of the Atlantic is an unsettled feeling, the feeling of a thing that unsettles with others. To have been shipped is to have been moved by others, with others ... In the hold ... another kind of feeling became common. This form of feeling was not collective, not given to decision, not adhering or reattaching to settlement, nation, state, territory or historical story; nor was it repossessed by the group, which could not now feel as one, reunified in time and space. No, when Black Shadow sings "are you feelin' the feelin'?" he is asking about something else. He is asking about a way of feeling through others, a feel for feeling others feeling you. This is modernity's insurgent feel, its inherited caress, its skin talk, tongue touch, breath speech, hand laugh. This is the feel we might call hapticality

Hapticality, the touch of the undercommons, the interiority of sentiment, the feel that what is to come is here. Hapticality, the capacity to feel through others, for others to feel through you, for you to feel them feeling you, this feel of the shipped is not regulated, at least not successfully, by a state, a religion, a people, an empire, a piece of land, a totem. Or perhaps we could say these are now recomposed in the wake of the shipped. Refused these things, we first refuse them, in the contained, amongst the contained, lying together in the ship, the boxcar, the prison, the hostel. Skin, against epidermalisation, senses touching ... Though forced to touch and be touched, to sense and be sensed in that space of no space, though refused sentiment, history and home, we feel (for) each other..

Soul music is a medium of this interiority on the skin ...

– Harney and Moten pp.97-8

‘Feelin the feelin’ is a point of entry to understand the incomprehensible, how music and voice become vehicles of this haptic experience of being on board a slave ship. This is before a sense of collectivity can be formed, before a language, articulated can be formed contra the state. It’s a sense of a something else that arises viscerally, beyond language’s intelligibility. Its radicality plays out sonically but also as he states at the level of the skin – the pharmakonic surface that is created in the unnameable experience in the hold but also in the sense of touch that becomes the beginning of what Harney and Moten call an insurgency. It is synesthetic this haptic experience – pulling the sense of touch together with the sense of song.

Skin and voice are the sites of contestation and agency. They are literally at the border between techne and body. And its hapticality comes into being in the machine of the hold.

Its afterlife Harney and Moten state comes into the continued experience of slavery on plantations and in prisons. Its song continues in the form of work songs, songs on the chain gang. These are soundtracks to work; it paces the gestures of indentured work in the afterlife in the hold.

I want to turn to the recording of the songs on a prison chain gang – as problematically or not – recorded by Pete Seeger. In *Wake Up Dead Man*, the folklorist Bruce Jackson describes his 1966 trip with Pete Seeger and his family to a prison in Texas to record the chain gang singing by inmates in the Ellis Unit. The area near the prison along the Trinity and Brazos rivers made for difficult work and had their own songs, as did the act of cutting trees. This was the legacy of plantation work – a way for workers to keep in rhythm so that none of them would be punished for going too slowly. These work songs, so intimately connected with plantation slavery and chain gangs were in decline as this form of indentured labour went into decline. As a result folklorists came from the north to record this music.

However in this film, it is hard to find the name of even one of these workers, or a shot of their face. The voice over extols the improved prison conditions in this area and the men working on the chain gang move in formation in spotless white throwing their skin into relief. There is an industrial machinic feel to their movement and yet in their singing there is an enervation the viewer feels in the rhythm of song and movement. We see them cutting trees en mass and as one tree begins to tumble, an arrhythm in their singing erupts. Some call out as the tree tips to the ground but even before it makes contact, the singing begins anew in another wave.

It’s difficult to see the men singing and working in rhythm in their pristine uniforms for the camera, and difficult to hear Pete Seeger talk about these great new prisons. But the presence of the prison guard mounted on his horse looking down on them undermines this. And under the watchful eye of the guard and the camera and Seeger’s voice over, something else happens in this afterlife of the hold, another kind of syncopation of movement that gets the overseers’ job done but also collects from below, in the rhythm and singing, a powerful force that moves this indentured labour

in another direction.

I want to stop here at the intersection of gesture and voice that is behind the machine, that contains the machine, that is saved for posterity yet also spoken for by those, like Pete Seeger. And yet, in spite of the cooptation and the speaking for there is a stubborn remainder a haptic ‘feelin the feelin’ that plays out in uneasy juxtaposition.

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Interboro Partners
BLOOD, SHEDS, AND FEARS: THE RESILIENCY OF RACISM

Interboro Partners is a New York City-based architecture, urban design and urban planning office led by Tobias Armbrorst, Daniel D'Oca, and Georgeen Theodore. They are currently finishing the book *The Arsenal of Exclusion & Inclusion*, featuring 156 "weapons" used by architects, planners, policy-makers, developers, real estate brokers, community activists and other urban actors to wage the ongoing war between integration and segregation.

This essay is excerpted from the forthcoming book *The Arsenal of Exclusion & Inclusion* (Actar, 2015)

BLOOD

When Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans in 2005, it disproportionately affected the city's low-income rental properties, especially in predominantly African American neighborhoods. The elimination of roughly 50,000 rentals pushed market rates up by 35%, thus making housing too expensive for many former tenants.¹ Meanwhile, tens of thousands of damaged homes lay abandoned. Federal assistance programs provided temporary accommodations, but creating long-term housing solutions for low-income populations proved one of the most formidable challenges facing the city and the region at large.²

St. Bernard Parish, which sits just east of New Orleans's Lower Ninth Ward, did not plan on cooperating with its neighbors to alleviate the shortage.³ Shortly after Katrina, the parish passed an ordinance to maintain the "integrity" and "family

1 Leslie Eaton, "In New Orleans, Plan to Raze Low-Income Housing Draws Protest," *New York Times*, December 14, 2007, accessed August 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/14/us/nationalspecial/14orleans.html>.

2 Campbell Robertson, "Housing Battle Reveals Post-Katrina Tensions," *New York Times*, October 3, 2009, accessed August 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/04/us/04housing.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

3 St. Bernard Parish was also devastated by Katrina and the subsequent levee breaches. Roughly 80% of its housing units were severely damaged and about half of its population was initially displaced. Due to a Murphy Oil refinery spill, sections of the parish also became brownfield sites.

Benjamin Alexander-Bloch, "St. Bernard Parish community reflects on Hurricane Katrina anniversary," *The Times-Picayune*, August 29, 2013, accessed August 2014, http://www.nola.com/katrina/index.ssf/2013/08/st_bernard_parish_community_re.html.

Also:

Billy Sothern, "A Question of Blood," *The Nation*, March 27, 2007, accessed March 2015, <http://www.thenation.com/article/question-blood>.

atmosphere” of its “long established neighborhoods.” Under this new “blood relative ordinance,” owners of single-family homes that had not been rentals prior to the hurricane could now only rent their homes to blood relatives. Importantly, a whopping 93% of the parish’s property owners were white, along with 88% of its overall population, whereas neighboring New Orleans communities were majority black. The Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center promptly sued St. Bernard, calling the blood-relative ordinance blatantly racist and in violation of the Fair Housing Act. Soon after, the Parish was forced to repeal the law.⁴

But the story doesn’t end there. In 2007, the St. Bernard Parish Council banned the rental (and even lending) of single-family properties in much of its district, including to blood-relatives. The next year, it imposed a one-year moratorium on any multifamily units. After a federal court struck the moratorium down for again violating the Fair Housing Act, Parish officials countered with a new law requiring a public vote on multifamily dwellings larger than six units.

SHED

Alter Road marks the political boundary between Detroit and Grosse Pointe Park. Though less notorious than Eight Mile, the city-suburb divide is equivalently stark: in the words of a local TV news reporter, there’s “boarded-up blight [and] a St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store” on the Detroit side, “trendy restaurants, families on bikes, decorative street lighting,” on the other.⁵ Additionally, Grosse Pointe Park is roughly 85% white, whereas the neighboring Detroit community is about 82% black.⁶

Running perpendicular to Alter Road is Kercheval Avenue, or “the Kerch,” which functions as the area’s main eastside route for motor traffic, including buses. On a few summer weekends in 2013, the City of Grosse Pointe Park experimented with closing sections of the street to cars to hold outdoor events.⁷ The programming was part of a larger vision: creating a more walkable community that would appeal to young, white-collar professionals. But city leaders also worried about Detroit’s blight spilling across the boundary, and so more aggressive plans were drafted to demarcate the commercial district from its less affluent neighbors.⁸

4 “Time Runs Out for St. Bernard Parish,” *New York Times*, March 29, 2011, accessed August 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/30/opinion/30wed3.html>.

5 Rodi Meloni, “Newly constructed barrier appears to separate Grosse Pointe Park, Detroit,” WDIV-TV, June 27, 2014, accessed September 2014, <http://www.clickondetroit.com/news/newly-constructed-barrier-appears-to-separate-grosse-pointe-park-detroit/26703588>.

6 Gus Burns, “Kercheval barricade at Detroit-Grosse Pointe Park border removed; development rumors unfounded, city says,” February 13, 2014, MLive.com, accessed September 2014, http://www.mlive.com/news/detroit/index.ssf/2014/02/kercheval_barricade_at_detroit.html.

7 Bill Laitner, “Kercheval Avenue closure for farmers market has some feeling shut out,” *Detroit Free Press*, July 28, 2014, accessed September 2014, <http://www.freep.com/article/20140728/NEWS05/307280055/Grosse-Pointe-Park-Duggan-blockade-microbrewery>.

8 Ibid.

The following winter, sewer line construction on Kercheval closed the street for months. While impassable, Grosse Pointe Park used the space to dump its excess snow. Some residents on the Detroit side perceived the resultant snow wall as a “distasteful” barrier between the communities. *Motor City Muckraker* even reported that the mounds were reminiscent of “the blockades built to keep out black Detroiters [during the 1967 riots] half a century ago.”⁹ Meanwhile, rumors circulated of new developments that would stretch across Kercheval, permanently closing the thoroughfare to motor traffic. But a Grosse Pointe Park spokesman responded that no such plans were in the works.¹⁰ The snow piles were eventually cleared, and the street was again opened up.

However, that summer Grosse Pointe Park announced its collaboration with the Grosse Pointe Foundation and local entrepreneurs to build a concrete market square, along with semi-permanent sheds, in the middle of Kercheval.¹¹ The West Park Farmers Market, which took place on Saturdays, would now operate three days a week out of the new spaces. Cars would be rerouted through an alley, making three sharp turns at 5 miles per hour. The sheds would face east, with their backs turned to Detroit.¹²

Immediately, Kercheval’s closing was perceived as an attempt to keep out black Detroiters. Residents protested that this was the sixth traffic barrier on Alter Road that separated the two cities.¹³ Greg Theokas, Mayor Pro Tem of Grosse Pointe Park, explained the new market square was not racially motivated, and in fact could provide jobs and fresh produce to Detroit residents, as well. Some suburban businesses described the project as having immediate positive effects on the neighborhood.¹⁴

BASKETBALL HOOP

In 2012, the majority white town of Springfield, New Jersey nearly voted to dismantle its outdoor basketball hoops on the grounds that one of its parks was attracting out-of-town players – primarily young black males – who were monopolizing the courts, swearing, and generally scaring the locals. “People are intimidated,” one resident

9 Steve Neavling, “Grosse Pointe Park builds wall of snow on busy road at border with Detroit,” *Motor City Muckraker*, February 13, 2014, accessed September 2014, <http://motorcitymuckraker.com/2014/02/13/grosse-pointe-park-builds-wall-of-snow-on-busy-road-at-border-with-detroit/>.

10 Burns, “Kercheval barricade at Detroit-Grosse Pointe Park border removed.”

11 Kathy Ryan, “Looking forward to summer,” Grosse Pointe News, April 20, 2014, accessed September 2014, <http://pointerofinterest.grossepointenews.com/Articles-News-i-2014-04-10-252952.114135-Looking-forward-to-summer.html>.

12 Laitner, “Kercheval Avenue closure for farmers market has some feeling shut out.”

13 Steve Neavling, “Records: Grosse Pointe used Detroit property to build controversial blockade without approval,” *Motor City Muckraker*, July 16, 2014, <http://motorcitymuckraker.com/2014/07/16/records-grosse-pointe-used-detroit-property-to-build-controversial-blockade/>.

14 Laitner, “Kercheval Avenue closure for farmers market has some feeling shut out.”

complained. “I used to look out of my window at a beautiful park with parents and kids playing soccer, now it looks like Rahway State Prison yard.”¹⁵

Ultimately, Springfield chose to keep its hoops, but an untold number of suburban communities around the country have opted to remove theirs. Numerous Illinois suburbs – including Oak Lawn, Palos Hills, Hoffman Estates, and Hanover Park—have torn down their hoops to “fend off fighting and swearing...curb noise...and limit violence” among visiting players from the South Side of Chicago who “don’t pay for the parks.”¹⁶ On the outskirts of Cleveland, the towns of Euclid and Lakewood—following neighborhood complaints about disorderly non-residents—have removed every public outdoor basketball hoop. Although nearby Cleveland Heights hosts a handful of courts, they can only be accessed with a pass from the town’s recreation department.¹⁷ And inner-ring suburbs in Baltimore County removed so many public basketball hoops during the 1990s (once again, due to complaints of noise, swearing, littering, and fighting among “outsiders”) that, on warm evenings, crowds of over fifty people would congregate on the few remaining courts, while hoop-less backboards rusted in adjacent parks.¹⁸

But basketball hoop removal, as a means of preventing the gathering of young men of color, is far from limited to the suburbs. Within cities, too, the dismantlement of hoops can reinforce neighborhood racial divisions. To cite one example: residents of Cleveland’s middle-class West Park neighborhood became so fed up with the behavior of basketball players from surrounding communities that the park’s hoops were mysteriously destroyed by vigilantes in the middle of the night (“someone hitched a truck to the thick poles that supported the backboards, then made a tractor pull – bending one hoop almost to the ground and the other to about half its regulation height.”)¹⁹ According to *The Cleveland Scene*, the vandalism was barely investigated, and the community chose not to replace the hoops. “It’s not kids in the neighborhood [who caused the problems],” one resident stated. “They don’t belong here. I’m not prejudiced. But these bozos would constantly ‘F-you! F-you! F-you!’...They ruin it for themselves.”²⁰

15 Julia Terruso, “Hoopla in Springfield: Residents argue over town’s decision to take down basketball hoops,” *Star-Ledger*, August 28, 2012, accessed March 2015, http://www.nj.com/union/index.ssf/2012/08/hoopla_in_springfield_resident.html.

16 Angie Leventis Lourgos, “Some towns having bad hoop dreams,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 6, 2013, accessed March 2015, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2013-10-06/news/ct-met-banning-basketball-20131006_1_basketball-hoops-midnight-basketball-wolfe-wildlife-refuge.

17 Michael Gill, “Where Hoop Dreams Die,” *Cleveland Scene*, June 30, 2010, accessed February 2015, <http://www.clevescene.com/cleveland/where-hoop-dreams-die/Content?oid=1939861>.

18 Joe Nawrozki, “Net loss in the suburbs: Unruly behavior, racial fears lead to removal of hoops,” *Baltimore Sun*, April 21, 1996, accessed February 2015, http://articles.baltimoresun.com/1996-04-21/news/1996112033_1_basketball-courts-baltimore-county-fear.

19 Michael Gill, “Where Hoop Dreams Die,” *Cleveland Scene*.

20 Ibid.

THE RESILIENCY OF RACISM

Not so long ago, it wasn't so difficult for white people to legally exclude people of color from their communities. For example, they could count on real estate developers to embed racial covenants in the deeds of neighborhood homes, thereby forbidding "persons of Asiatic, African, or Negro blood"²¹ from living in them. They could count on brokers to never introduce "inharmonious elements" into their neighborhood.²² In some cases, they could count on their city to zone entire neighborhoods for specific races, thereby prohibiting people of color from moving into majority white areas (and vice versa) in the first place.²³ Most importantly of all, perhaps, they could count on the federal government to "redline" black neighborhoods, and steer lenders away from the inner-city, while also incentivizing "white flight" into segregated, postwar suburban communities.²⁴ Of course, when any of these (or countless other) methods of exclusion faltered, a racist white citizenry could also commit violent terrorist acts against black people with relative impunity.

Racial covenants, racial steering, racial zoning, and mortgage discrimination have been outlawed, but as the abovementioned discriminatory antics about St Bernard Parish's blood relative ordinance, Grosse Pointe Park's shed, and the various suburbs' removal of basketball hoops suggest, there is certainly no shortage of contemporary weapons of exclusion. These discriminatory antics illustrate the resiliency of racism, but also its pervasiveness: the examples above create exclusion in housing, transportation, and public space, respectively. The examples above also illustrate what we might call the resourcefulness of racism, since the weapons they describe take the form of a policy, an artifact, and a practice.

As the examples above make plain, those of us who are working to build more integrated communities have to first of all be vigilant, and remain on the lookout for the counter-policies, practices, and artifacts that pop up and undermine accessibility-promoting policies. And because these tend to take some surprising forms (blood-relative ordinances, snow banks, sheds, etc.) we sometimes have to see past appearances. (To cite another example of this, in California, where State law prohibits sex offenders from living within 2,000 feet of a park or school, communities across Los Angeles have started building "Parks" – some of them just a few thousand square feet – in spaces that fall outside these 2,000-foot radii, effectively forcing sex

21 "The Seattle Open Housing Campaign, 1959-1968," Seattle Municipal Archives, accessed March 2015, <http://www.seattle.gov/cityarchives/exhibits-and-education/digital-document-libraries/the-seattle-open-housing-campaign>.

22 National Association of Real Estate Brokers (NAREB) (Code of Ethics: 1922): Article 34.

23 Antero Pietila, *Not in My Neighborhood* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2010).

24 U. S. Federal Housing Administration (1936). *Underwriting Manual: Underwriting and Valuation Procedure Under Title II of the National Housing Act*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

offenders to leave town.)²⁵

The resiliency of racism suggests that we will not have integrated, equitable cities until we work on the will in addition to the way – until people are less likely to exercise the exclusionary impulse in the first place. But in the meantime we need to continue to produce and enforce progressive policies that not only removes barriers, but affirmatively further integration. Indeed, thanks to the Fair Housing Act, in the end, St. Bernard Parish was unsuccessful in its discriminatory antics. Fed up with what the U.S. Department of Justice would later call St. Bernard Parish’s “multi-year campaign to limit rental housing opportunities for African-Americans”,²⁶ the Department of Housing and Urban Development threatened in 2011 to revoke \$91 million in federal aid unless the Parish repealed the aforementioned ordinances. The Parish complied. (In Grosse Pointe Park’s case, it turned out that the market had been built on Detroit property, which meant that Grosse Pointe Park did not have the necessary approval to construct the blockade.)²⁷

Unfortunately, as Nikole Hannah-Jones illustrates in “Living Apart: How the Government Betrayed a Landmark Civil Rights Law,” enforcing progressive, accessibility-promoting policies like the Fair Housing Act hasn’t exactly been a priority for the Federal Government. Hannah-Jones notes that, though states, cities and towns seeking HUD money for water, sewer and highway projects are supposed to identify obstacles to fair housing, keep records of their efforts to overcome them, and certify that they do not discriminate, there have been only two occasions since 1973 in which the department withheld money from localities for failing to do so. In fact, writes Hannah-Jones, in several instances, “HUD has sent grants to communities even after they’ve been found by courts to have promoted segregated housing or been sued by the U.S. Department of Justice.” New Orleans, for example, “has continued to receive grants after the Justice Department sued it for violating that Fair Housing Act by blocking a low-income housing project in a wealthy historic neighborhood.”

The recent uprisings in Ferguson, Missouri, catalyzed by the police shooting of 18-year-old Michael Brown, have helped to dispel the myth of a post-racial, Obama-era America. They have also demonstrated, as Richard Rothstein elucidates in “The Making of Ferguson: Public Policy at the Root of its Troubles,” the degree to which

25 Ian Lovett, “Neighborhoods Seek to Banish Sex Offenders by Building Parks,” *New York Times*, March 9, 2013, accessed June 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/10/us/building-tiny-parks-to-drive-sex-offenders-away.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

26 “Fair Housing Center and U.S. Department of Justice File Suit Against St. Bernard Parish Over Racial Discrimination in Housing,” Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center, February 1, 2012, accessed August 2014, <http://www.gnofairhousing.org/2012/02/01/fair-housing-center-and-u-s-department-of-justice-file-suit-against-st-bernard-parish-over-racial-discrimination-in-housing/>.

27 Bill Laitner, “Grosse Pointe Park to lift Kercheval barricade, add plaza,” *Detroit Free Press*, December 18, 2014, accessed January 2015, <http://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/wayne/2014/12/18/grosse-pointe-park-removing-traffic-barrier-detroit-border/20568763/>.

white supremacy, as reflected in public policy, has shaped and continues to shape our urban environments.²⁸ Let's hope the renewed conversations around race and place that have emerged in the wake of the protests lead to a renewed effort to remove barriers to access, and build more integrated, equitable cities.

28 Richard Rothstein, "The Making of Ferguson: Public Policy at the Root of its Troubles," October 15, 2014, accessed October 2014, <http://www.epi.org/publication/making-ferguson/>.

Jonathan M. Metzl
MENTAL ILLNESS, GUN VIOLENCE, AND (MISGUIDED) POLICY INTERVENTIONS

Dr. Jonathan M. Metzl is professor of sociology and psychiatry and the director of the Center for Medicine, Health and Society at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. His books include *The Protest Psychosis*, *Prozac on the Couch*, and *Against Health*. His current projects are the history of medical boundary violations, structural competency, RWJ men and masculinity project, and guns and mental illness.

New legislation in a number of U.S. states requires mental-health professionals to assess their patients for the potential to commit gun crimes. For instance, New York state law mandates that mental-health professionals report anyone who “is likely to engage in conduct that would result in serious harm to self or others” to the state’s Division of Criminal Justice Services, which then alerts the local authorities to revoke the person’s firearms license and confiscate their weapons.¹ Similarly, a recently passed bill in Tennessee requires mental-health professionals to report “threatening patients” to local law enforcement.²

Supporters of these laws argue that they provide important tools for law enforcement officials to identify potentially violent persons, and perhaps understandably so. U.S. policymakers and the general public look to psychiatry, psychology, neuroscience, and related disciplines as sources of certainty in the face of the often incomprehensible terror and loss that gun violence inevitably produces. And undeniably, persons with mental illness who have shown violent tendencies should not have access to weapons that could be used to harm themselves or others.³

However, the notion that psychiatric attention might prevent gun crime is more complicated than it might seem. New research done by myself and my colleague, Professor Ken MacLeish, warns of the potential pitfalls of such laws if they are unaccompanied by other community based and gun-focused interventions.⁴ We systematically review key literatures from fields including psychiatry, psychology, public health, and sociology that address connections between mental illness and gun violence between 1960 and 2014. We also call upon our own primary source historical research on violence, and mental illness⁵, and American gun culture.^{6,7,8}

From this review we critically address three central assumptions that underlie many U.S. political and popular associations between gun violence and mental illness:

- (1) that *mental illness causes gun violence*;
- (2) that *psychiatric diagnosis can predict gun crime before it happens*;
- (3) that *U.S. mass-shootings teach us to fear mentally ill loners*;

Each of these statements is certainly true in particular instances.⁹ At the same time, our research shows how these seemingly self-evident assumptions are replete with complicated and at times contradictory assumptions. At the aggregate level, the notion that mental illness causes gun violence stereotypes a diverse population of persons diagnosed with psychiatric conditions and oversimplifies links between violence and mental illness. Moreover, notions of mental illness that emerge in relation to gun violence frequently reflect larger cultural issues that become obscured when mass shootings come to stand in for all gun crime and when “mentally ill” ceases to be a medical designation and becomes a sign of violent threat.

We also show how anxieties about insanity and gun violence are imbued with oft-unspoken anxieties about race, politics, and the unequal distribution of violence in American society. In the current American political landscape, these tensions play out most clearly in the discourse surrounding controversial “stand-your-ground” laws.¹⁰ Our analysis suggests that similar, if less overt historical tensions suffuse discourses linking guns and mental illness in ways that subtly connect “insane” gun crimes with oft-unspoken assumptions about “white” individualism or “black” communal aggression.

Ultimately, our research challenges psychiatry to think deeply about potentially untenable situations in which mental-health practitioners become the persons most empowered to make decisions about gun ownership and most liable for failures to predict gun violence – if these situations are not accompanied by larger reforms that address the social, structural, and indeed psychological implications of gun violence in the United States.

1. MENTAL ILLNESS CAUSES GUN VIOLENCE

The focus on mental illness in the wake of recent mass shootings in the U.S. reflects a decades-long history of psychiatric and legal debates about guns, gun violence and “mental competence.” Psychiatric articles in the 1960s deliberated ways to assess whether mental patients were “of sound mind enough” to possess firearms.¹¹ After the 2012 shooting at Newtown, psychiatrist E. Fuller Torrey claimed that “about half of...mass killings are being done by people with severe mental illness, mostly schizophrenia, and if they were being treated they would have been preventable.”¹²

Yet surprisingly little population-level evidence supports the notion that individuals diagnosed with mental illness are more likely than anyone else to commit gun crimes. According to psychiatrist Paul Appelbaum¹³, less than 3–5% of American crimes involve people with mental illness, and the percentages of crimes that involve guns are lower than the national average for persons not diagnosed with mental illness. Databases that track gun homicides, such as the National Center for Health Statistics, similarly show that fewer than 5% of the 120,000 gun-related killings in the U.S. between 2001 and 2010 were perpetrated by people diagnosed with mental illness.¹⁴

Moreover, a growing body of research suggests that mass shootings represent anecdotal distortions of, rather than representations of, the actions of “mentally ill” people as an aggregate group. By most estimates, there were fewer than 100 mass shootings reported in the United States – defined as crimes “when four or more people are shot in an event, or related series of events” – between 1982 and 2012.¹⁵ Rates of reported mass shootings then rose in 2013 and 2014.¹⁶ Scholars who study violence prevention thus contend that mass-shootings occur far too infrequently to allow for the statistical modeling and predictability – factors that lie at the heart of effective public-health interventions. Psychologist Jeffrey Swanson argues that mass shootings denote “rare acts of violence”¹⁷ that have little predictive or preventive validity in relation to the bigger picture of the 32,000 fatalities and 74,000 injuries caused on average by gun violence and gun suicide each year in the United States.¹⁸

Media reports often assume a binary between mild and severe mental illness, and connect the latter form to unpredictability and lack of self-control. However, this distinction, too, is called into question by mental-health research. To be sure, a number of the most common psychiatric diagnoses, including depressive, anxiety, and attention-deficit disorders, have no correlation with violence whatsoever.¹⁹ Community studies find that serious mental illness without substance abuse is also “statistically unrelated” to community violence.²⁰ At the aggregate level, the vast majority of people diagnosed with psychiatric disorders do not commit violent acts – only about 4 percent of violence in the United States can be attributed to people diagnosed with mental illness.²¹

This is not to suggest that researchers know nothing about predictive factors for gun violence. However, credible studies suggest that a number of risk factors more strongly correlate with gun violence than mental illness alone. For instance, alcohol and drug use increase the risk of violent crime by as much as seven-fold, even among persons with no history of mental illness.²² According to Van Dorn, a history of childhood abuse, binge drinking, and male gender are all predictive risk factors for serious violence.²³ Miller and colleagues found that homicide was more common in areas where household firearms ownership was higher.²⁴ Availability of guns is also considered a more predictive factor than is psychiatric diagnosis in many of the 19,000 American completed gun suicides each year.²⁵

Again, certain persons with mental illness undoubtedly commit violent acts. Yet growing evidence suggests that mass shootings represent statistical aberrations that reveal more about particularly horrible instances than they do about population-level events. To use Swanson’s phrasing, basing gun-crime-prevention efforts on the mental health histories of mass shooters risks building “common evidence” from “uncommon things.” Such an approach thereby loses the opportunity to build common evidence from common things – such as the types of evidence that clinicians of many medical specialties might catalogue about substance abuse, domestic violence, availability of firearms, suicidality, social networks, economic stress, and other factors.

2. PSYCHIATRIC DIAGNOSIS CAN PREDICT GUN CRIME BEFORE IT HAPPENS

Again, legislation in a number of states now mandates that psychiatrists assess their patients for the potential to commit violent gun crime. History suggests, however, that psychiatrists are inefficient gatekeepers in this regard. Data supporting the predictive value of psychiatric diagnosis in matters of gun violence is thin at best. Psychiatric diagnosis is largely an observational tool, not an extrapolative one. Largely for this reason, research dating back to the 1970s suggests that psychiatrists using clinical judgment have difficulty predicting which individual patients will commit violent crimes and which will not.²⁶

The lack of prognostic specificity is in large part a matter of simple math. Psychiatric diagnosis is in-and-of-itself not predictive of violence, and even the overwhelming majority of psychiatric patients do not commit crimes.^{27 28}

In this sense, population-based literature on guns and mental illness suggests that legislatures risk drawing the wrong lessons from gun crimes and mass shootings if their responses focus on asking psychiatrists to predict future events. Though rooted in valid concerns about public safety, legislation that expands mental-health criteria for revoking gun rights puts psychiatrists in potentially untenable positions, not because they are poor judges of character, but because the urgent political and social conditions psychiatrists are asked to diagnose are at times at odds with the capabilities of their diagnostic tools and prognostic technologies.

3. LOOK OUT FOR DANGEROUS LONERS

Mass shootings in the US are often framed as the work of loners – unstable, angry white men who never should have had access to firearms.²⁹ And to be sure, a number of other recent shooters undoubtedly led troubled, solitary lives. It is important to note, however that the seemingly self-evident images of the mentally disturbed, gun obsessed, white male loner are relatively recent phenomena.³⁰ In the 1960s and 1970s, by contrast, many of the men labeled as violent and mentally ill were also, it turned out, African American. And, when the potential assailants were black, American psychiatric and popular culture frequently blamed “black culture” or black activist politics³¹ – not individual, lone “shooters” – for the threats such men were imagined to pose.³²

For instance, anxieties about race and politics shaped many 1960s-era American political associations between schizophrenia and gun violence. FBI profilers spuriously diagnosed many “pro-gun” black political leaders with militant forms of schizophrenia as a way of highlighting the insanity of their political activism. According to declassified documents, the FBI diagnosed Malcolm X with “pre-psychotic paranoid schizophrenia” while highlighting his attempts to obtain firearms.³³ The FBI also diagnosed Robert Williams, the head of the Monroe, North Carolina chapter of the NAACP, as schizophrenic, armed, and dangerous during his flight from

trumped-up kidnapping charges in the early 1960s.³⁴ Malcolm X, Robert Williams, and other leaders of African-American political groups were far from schizophrenic. But fears about their political sentiments, guns, and sanity mobilized substantial response.

During this same era, U.S. psychiatry often spoke out in favor of gun control – articles in the *American Journal of Psychiatry* urged psychiatrists to address “the urgent social issue” of firearms in response to “the threat of civil disorder.”³⁵

Recent history thus suggests that cultural politics underlie anxieties about whether guns and mental illness are thought to represent individual or communal etiologies. In the 1960s and 1970s, widespread concerns about black “cultural”³⁶ and political violence fomented calls for widespread reforms in gun ownership. As this played out, politicians, FBI profilers, and psychiatric authors argued for the right to use mental-health criteria to limit gun access. However in the present day, the actions of “lone” white male shooters go hand-in-hand with calls to limit guns rights just for the severely mentally ill. Indeed it would seem political suicide for a legislator or doctor³⁷ to hint at restricting the gun rights for white Americans, private citizens, or men, even though these groups are frequently linked to high-profile mass shootings.

CONCLUSION

Questioning the associations between guns and mental illness in no way detracts from the dire need to stem gun crime. Yet as the fractious U.S. debate about gun rights plays out, it seems incumbent to find common ground beyond assumptions about whether particular assailants meet criteria for specific illnesses, or whether mental-health experts can predict violence before it occurs. Of course, understanding a person’s mental state is vital to understanding their actions. At the same time, focusing legislative policy and popular discourse so centrally on mental illness is rife with potential problems if, as seems increasingly the case, those policies are not embedded in larger societal strategies and structural-level interventions.

As such, agendas that hold mental-health workers accountable for identifying dangerous assailants puts these workers in potentially untenable positions because the legal duties they are asked to perform misalign with the predictive value of their expertise. In this sense, instead of accepting the expanded authority provided by current gun legislation, mental-health workers and organizations might be better served by identifying and promoting areas of common cause between clinic and community, or between the social and psychological dimensions of gun violence.³⁸ Connections between loaded handguns and alcohol, the mental-health effects of gun violence in low-income communities, or the relationships between gun violence and family, social, or socioeconomic networks are but a few of the topics in which mental-health expertise might productively join community and legislative discourses to promote more effective medical and moral arguments for sensible gun policy than currently arise amongst the partisan rancor.

Put another way, perhaps psychiatric expertise might be put to better use by enhancing U.S. understandings of the complex anxieties, social and economic formations, and blind assumptions that make people fear each other in the first place. Psychiatry could help society interrogate what guns mean to everyday people, and why people feel they need guns or reject guns out-of-hand. By addressing gun discord as symptomatic of deeper concerns, psychiatry could, ideally, promote more meaningful public conversations on the impact of guns on civic life. And it could join with public-health researchers, community activists, law enforcement officers, or business leaders to identify and address the underlying structural³⁹ and infrastructural⁴⁰ issues that foster real or imagined notions of mortal fear.

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POLICY PEOPLE

Symposium

28 March 2015

15:00 - 22:00

'Does Not Equal' Study Room

W139

Warmoesstraat 139

Amsterdam, NL

POLICY PEOPLE parses the axis of 'prevention' and 'participation' across policy discourses in an effort to undo policy and to introduce spaces for contestation within policy processes. Through a delayed relay of dialogues we will generate material for the policy fugitives.

'Policy People' is a collaborative research project initiated by writer E. C. Feiss and designer Karisa Senavitis at the Jan van Eyck Academie in 2014. The project departs from Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's discussion of 'Policy' in their book *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (Minor Compositions, 2013.). Harney and Moten have developed a diffuse notion of 'Policy' as a discursive regime (abstracted from specific content) and tool of biopolitical control. They characterize 'Policy' as 'the act of pronouncing others as incorrect.' We came to this project because of our respective work in very different sectors (Feiss worked in cultural policy in London and Senavitis consulted in public health policy in New York and Brussels) but when we compared experiences we noticed aligned 'positive' rhetorics (participation in culture and prevention in public health) which functioned to engender structurally connected dispossession on the populations targeted.

Commissioned texts/interviews by Ayesha Hameed, Claire Pentecost, Gillian Harkins and Erica Meiners, Interboro Partners and Jonathan M. Metzl dealing practically or theoretically with policy in a biopolitical realm (food, health, mobility, education, and housing) will be activated in a symposium of peers, Egbert Alejandro Martina, Gabriela Quiroga, Hannah Black, Marina Vishmidt, and Simone Zeefuik at the 'Does Not Equal' Study Room at W139 in Amsterdam, 28 March 2015.

The material produced prior to and the discussion during the symposium will come together in a future publication. This reader is an unfinished working document for all contributors and guests. It includes drafts of all the first phase texts and interviews by those who wrote for Policy People but will not attend the symposium in person.

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