



Experience, Movement and the Creation of New Political Forms

Brett Neilson and Ned Rossiter

This collection of essays was born somewhere between Moscow and Beijing. While the *ephemera* conference on the trans-Siberian train has already inspired an issue of this journal, the experience of that journey would raise, for some who were on the train, a number of issues that go way beyond that which unfolded between these points of departure and arrival. At stake are a series of questions about experience, movement and political life that were neither loaded nor unloaded with the baggage carried by each participant. More than the conference's content, it was its form that interested us – which is to say its organizational process. 'Organization without ends' was one way in which this process was repeatedly described – a practice that intervenes at the level of human potentialities rather than some goal-oriented activity. A bringing together of bodies and minds not in common cause but in movement: attraction and rejection, combination and withdrawal.

As with every passage between content and form, however, there is a remainder. No experience can present itself as immediate without exhibiting something of what it must exclude in order to constitute itself as an experience. This is the detritus of present life, a kind of unwanted surplus that knocks down the laboratory walls of political experimentation, leaving each subject 'alone with others'. Perhaps once it was possible to identify neutral circumstances against which to establish spaces of experimentation, laboratory conditions – whether temporarily autonomous or otherwise. But with the emptying of political modernity – the double system of rights and representation and all its implied institutions – this 'normality' had receded before the exceptional economic forces of neoliberalism. Never before has the invisible hand been so visible! No longer can the institutions of modernity function as a placebo. There are no more 'models' or handrails.

How then to give political form to diverse and arbitrary experiences, which at once manifest the generic capacities of the human being but also are a site of contestation (since experience is never self-evident or merely 'given')? This is the fundamental question we posed to the contributors to this issue of *ephemera*, both those who write about the trans-Siberian and those on an altogether different trip.

The sheer difficulty of this question is evident in the essays that follow. Everyone seems to recognise the need for new political or institutional forms, but no-one seems to know how to construct them. But perhaps this is because construction is the wrong metaphor? Perhaps the gap between experience and organization is forever closed. How then to occupy a space that no longer exists? How to search for that crucial break or political opening, when the possibility of living outside or beneath the screens of control seems ever less possible? Aside from the tired formulations of *being inside and against* or the activist's vocational zeal, there is a need to derive new forms of creative resistance and political relation. This is the *Aufgabe* to which the current issue of *ephemera* is dedicated.

the editors

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