



Repairing the community: UT Califas and convivial tools of the commons*

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abstract

In this essay, I take up the tension between an always-present infrastructure of repair and maintenance and the opportunities for autonomy present when commodities break by proposing we engage in what Ivan Illich theorized as a convivial reconstruction. Rather than only thinking of repair and maintenance when ‘things’ break down in a commodity-intensive society, *pace* Illich, we need a Copernican revolution to rethink our investment in industrial mode of production and industrial tools altogether. Towards that end, Illich’s approach to conviviality and the possibilities of convivial tools not only provides a useful critique of the ‘industrial mode of production’ and the ‘industrial impotence’ that it produces but provides a blueprint for autonomy and a ‘new modern toolkit’ to re-weave the social fabric. As an example, I briefly examine a Zapatista civic pedagogy as a theoretical strategy towards autonomy and present Universidad de la Tierra Califas as another example of a convivial tool.

Introduction

What happens when a thing breaks or no longer functions? A growing DIY community is predisposed to fix it themselves with the gumption to overcome

* The author would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their thoughtful comments and especially the editors of this special issue for their care with the essay. This essay has also benefited significantly from my participation in the 3CT Social Theory Workshop, University of Chicago, November 16, 2017; Seminario Sobre Ivan Illich, Universidad de la Tierra, Oaxaca, January 8-11, 2018; and the Social Emancipation Summer School and Seminar, Universidad de la Tierra, Oaxaca, August 6-14, 2018.

any malfunctions rather than remain powerless when confronted by a breakdown, pointing to the political possibilities of a renewed spirit of self-reliance animated by social, collective, processes of creative DIY problem solving. Indeed, as Valeria Graziano and Kim Trogal argue, ‘contemporary collective repair practices should be seen as a “lifestyle movement” rather than simply as a lifestyle choice, as their investments in an ethos of sharing, communing and mutuality reveals an effort to participate in the construction of political alternatives’ (Graziano and Trogal, 2017: 637). Unfortunately however, the majority of us in a commodity-intensive society are mostly unaware of an always-present repair and maintenance infrastructure. ‘Things only come into visible focus as things when they become inoperable’, according to Graham and Thrift, ‘they break or stutter and they then become the object of attention’ (Graham and Thrift, 2007: 2). Unconcerned about a thing until it no longer functions properly, we are likely to be even less worried about the amount of effort devoted to maintaining the developed world. Indeed, our manufactured indifference overlooks how pedagogical repair can be especially in situations of ‘crisis’, often where there are few resources (Graham and Thrift, 2007).

While some argue that the politics of repair and maintenance have been overlooked even though essential ‘to keep modern societies going’ (Graham and Thrift, 2007: 1), what has been even less interrogated is the power of the thing, broken or not, or better put, its reification whatever its condition. In other words, the challenges and opportunities of repair and maintenance are usually understood in relation to ‘things’ rarely calling into question the underlying social organization of commodity-intensive society, that is how commodities circulate and reproduce social relations within a capitalist system. When that thing breaks, our dependence on it, or ‘industrialized impotence’ (Illich, 2009a: 9), is immediately revealed. However, broken and in need of repair, the thing remains a commodity and as such it articulates a particular social relation in disuse, while in disrepair, or even when discarded. Fixing does not necessarily mend the socially mediated condition we find ourselves to begin with. The challenge of a repair movement then could be to interrogate our relation to the ‘industrial mode of production’ – that is our unquestioned dependence on the thing in the first place. ‘We must focus our attention on the industrially determined shape of our expectations’, warns Ivan Illich (Illich, 2009b: 20).

In addition to interrogating the demands and opportunities of repair and maintenance of the commodity society, we might rethink our investment in the industrial mode of production altogether – a rethinking where Illich called for

nothing less than a ‘Copernican revolution in our perception of values’¹ (Illich, 1978: 16). Illich’s call for a convivial reconstruction provides an innovative blueprint for a collective, embodied praxis to reclaim social processes as yet mediated by capital and the state. Shifting our focus to conviviality, my goal is to point to critical moments where ‘repair’ and ‘maintenance’ can be more about reweaving the social fabric.

In what follows, I proffer a provisional set of statements around convivial tools and by extension conviviality. I revisit Illich’s critique of the industrial mode of production and his proposal for convivial reconstruction to examine how a committed conviviality can lend itself to the re-construction of the social infrastructure of communities, providing something of a repair manual to get beyond the most destructive elements of capitalism.

My point of reference as to how the social fabric might be re-woven through convivial tools is the Ejército Zapatista Liberación Nacional (EZLN). The Zapatista provocation first promulgated in January 1994 invites a critical re-thinking of the politics of repair. In many ways, the Zapatista’s talent in the art of reading what has not yet been written (Subcomandante Marcos, 2005: 292) speaks to what Fred Moten asks of a critical approach to repair in general:

What if we could detach repair not only from restoration but also from the very idea of the original – not so that repair comes first but that it comes before. Then, making and repair are inseparable, devoted to one another, suspended between and beside themselves. (Moten, 2017: 168)

Situating Illich’s critique of industrial mode of production alongside more recent debates about the production of value, my goal is less to define conviviality and more to suggest critical elements that orient an approach to Zapatismo, specifically a Zapatista civic pedagogy, as an embodiment of a ‘new kind of modern tool kit’ for a new kind of politics of repair. As part of this effort, I briefly examine the example of Universidad de la Tierra Califas, a cautious effort at an urban Zapatismo attempting to root outside of Chiapas.

Towards a convivial reconstruction

Critical theorizations of capitalism have been gaining increased notoriety as capitalism seems to be confronted by what many hope will be its final ‘crisis’. Important analytical perspectives have placed the environment and the exhaustion of ‘cheap nature’ (Moore, 2015), for example, at the center of the

¹ For a discussion of the limits of Illich’s use of ‘industrial mode of production’, see Cleaver, 1987.

analysis. However, others have warned that capitalism is not coming to an end because it has reached its limit in nature, much less because of the successes of its historic enemies (Kurz, 2016). Emphasizing the impact of capitalism's internal contradictions, Robert Kurz invites us not to misplace hopes in the traditional 'revolutionary subject' but to consider the emerging subject of the alternative:

Without a doubt extraparliamentary, organized social struggles for the material and cultural necessities of life as resistance against the brutal lowering of the level of civilization is the only alternative to the left's political, parliamentary complicity in state-sponsored crisis administration. A newly constituted social counter-movement will be equally indispensable, initially in the form of the immanent attempt to work through contradictions, which will not delegate its needs and demands to the state but instead advance autonomous demands, even if those are made of the state. (Kurz, 2014: 343-344)

I read these 'extraparliamentary organized social struggles' able to pursue 'autonomous demands' as something akin to what has been theorized as 'societies in movement', struggles embodying the type of counter-power increasingly visible throughout Latin America and exemplified by the EZLN (Zibechi 2010, 2018; Gutiérrez, 2012; Sitrin, 2016). At 'the end of a period of the state-centered organization of social and economic life' (Postone, 2009: 31-32), societies in movement focus on everyday life and lifeways beyond capitalism.

Warning that 'one cannot escape from the structural constraints of the system by democratising access to its functions', Anselm Jappe proclaims that 'emancipation, therefore, can only be liberation from what inhibits autonomy at a deeper and more wide-ranging level' (Jappe, 2017: 9). Emancipation is inextricably linked to autonomy, continues Raquel Gutiérrez:

That is, to reflect on emancipation consists primarily of understanding how, at times, groups of men and women of different stripes come together intermittently, though assertively, to establish limits on what is to be done with and to them and to conjure other possibilities and new alternatives to what was previously known or envisioned. Emancipation, then, is about understanding this common capacity to take action and to decide for and by themselves. (Gutiérrez, 2012: 55)

And here, Illich's convivial reconstruction and his approach to conviviality might be of use. Although Kurz, Jappe, and Postone warn us about the necessity to avoid transhistorical categories and to prioritize commodity when critiquing late capitalism, we can turn to Illich for insights as to how a commodity-intensive society attacks the vernacular, that is, our collective persistence striving for autonomy. Illich's interrogation of the industrial mode of production makes visible how commodity disempowers individuals and communities, facilitating a

surrender to needs that can only be satiated by ever more goods and services dispensed by members of ‘disabling professions’ (Illich, 1978: 16). Illich's discomfort with ‘industrialized impotence’ (Illich, 1978: viii) and his invitation to re-valorize subsistence, all those practices not yet mediated by commodity, refocuses our attention on those activities that are ‘embedded in a circumscribed whole’ where the tasks and tools that are required for the community's regeneration are each vital (Illich, 1990: para. 7).

At the core of Illich's critique of the industrial mode of production is the need to recognize the ‘processes through which growing dependence on mass-produced goods and services gradually erodes the conditions necessary for a convivial life’ (Illich, 1978: vii). For Illich, the choice is between an over-wrought, over-produced, and over-consumed society, along with all the illusions or taken-for-granted certainties that drive it – especially the bureaucratic, industrial imperialism that maintains it – against an always present, emergent convivial community. ‘In other words’, Illich declares:

societies can either retain their market-intensive economies, changing only the design of the output, or they can reduce their dependence on commodities. The latter alternative entails the adventure of imagining and constructing new frameworks in which individuals and communities can develop a new kind of modern tool kit. This would be organized so as to permit people to shape and satisfy an expanding proportion of their needs directly and personally. (Illich, 1978: 14)

Illich approaches ‘tools’ broadly in order ‘to subsume into one category all rationally designed devices, be they artifacts or rules, codes or operators, and to distinguish all these planned and engineered instrumentalities from other things such as basic food or implements, which in a given culture are not deemed to be subject to rationalization’ (Illich, 2009b: 20-21). Consequently, tools can include ‘simple hardware’, ‘productive institutions’, and, most importantly, ‘productive systems for intangible commodities such as those which produce “education”, “health”, “knowledge”, or “decisions”.’ (Illich, 2009b: 20) The importance of tools for Illich cannot be overestimated. ‘Tools’, he insists, ‘are intrinsic to social relationships’ (Illich, 2009b: 22). They are so fundamental to society that ‘an individual relates himself in action to his society through the use of tools *that he actively masters, or by which he is passively acted upon*’ (Illich, 2009b: 22, italics mine). Thus, we might say a tool either reinforces or changes a social relation. Tools ‘foster conviviality’ when they are accessible and easily used by ‘anybody, as often or as seldom as desired, for a purpose chosen by the user’ (Illich, 2009b: 22). These tools are ones that resist homogenization and interchangeability common to, as Jappe warns, the totalitarianization of commodity society (Jappe, 2017: 99).

Concerned about the ascendance of industrial tools over convivial ones, Illich's critique of the industrial mode of production entails less worry about repair and maintenance and more of an emphasis on the necessary distinction between corrosive or productive tools, underscoring the deleterious impact most industrial tools can have when they are no longer in our service. Illich's warning against the industrial mode of production promotes multiple oppositions and by extension strategies to confront those systems that breed dependence on industrial staples, either tangible goods or intangible services, that 'paralyzes the autonomous creation of use-values' (Illich, 1978: 4). Illich's proposal for convivial reconstruction begins with an examination to determine where tools have begun to exceed their purpose or design, no longer serving people embedded in a web of relations, limiting another's desires, and undermining his/her/their relationship to the local environment and the community as a whole. In this approach, the tool, not the ideology, becomes paramount and its utility as a convivial device is determined in shared struggle.

Unfortunately, Illich's utility for escaping the 'negative internalities of modernity' has seldom been fully appreciated, and is of little use if not properly situated alongside his opposition to the war against subsistence. Corrosive industrial tools actively limit access to ways of being in the world that result from relations between people and their claims to placed knowledges, a 'vernacular mode of being' (Illich, 1981: 58). As people become increasingly vulnerable to toxic tools and oppressive systems they grow more distant from the situated knowledges that sustained them in and through community, 'a locally understood interdependence of local people, local culture, local economy, and local nature' (Berry, 1993: 119).

Zapatista accumulation of struggle

The EZLN and the rebel Zapatista communities of Chiapas have co-generated something of a 'new kind of modern toolkit' as suggested by Illich — one that disrupts the commodity-intensive society and repairs the damage done by its most ruinous elements. The Zapatistas have been deliberate about the tools they have forged over the course of the phases of their struggle (fire, word, and autonomy). They have developed tools required, for example, for forming a successful army, while additional tools made it possible for the military not to play a detrimental role in the community's unfolding exercise of autonomy. There have been several unique tools invented by the Zapatistas designed for shared decision-making, making it possible for all community members to learn the arts of governing. The most notable in this regard are the Rebel Autonomous Zapatista Municipalities (MAREZ), *juntas de buen gobierno* (JBG), and *caracoles*.

Working in conjunction with the *juntas de buen gobierno* (JBG), the *caracoles* are designed as centers to facilitate a number of different encounters with international and national activist networks; they are an essential strategy to manage the contradictions of the solidarity community. The *caracoles* and the JBG re-establish a system of *cargos*, or collectively determined obligations, that make it possible for community members to rotate into positions of responsibility in order to perform the necessary tasks of collectively managing the community's interests internally and externally, facilitating the successful maintenance of the community and ensuring that everyone learns the arts of governance (Gonzalez Casanova, 2005).

Another example is the convening and facilitating of the Critical Thought in the Face of the Capitalist Hydra (EZLN, 2016), the Zapatistas declared the need for new conceptual tools to confront capitalism's violent decomposition. This call emerged out of the Zapatista's longstanding success in generating a number of analytical devices for reading the conjuncture, the decomposition of the party-state, etc. Moreover, the Zapatista's holding of space recently advanced through the *conversatorio* and the *seminario/ seed bed*, continues a form of the on-going convivial research and insurgent learning that is at the center of a politics of encounter. These devices help orient the community, especially making it possible for women, youth, and other marginalized groups to be increasingly at the center of horizontal democratic spaces (Rosset, et. al., 2005: 37). Similarly, the seven 'principles of *mandar obedeciendo*', or 'governing while obeying', have proven to be extremely useful as part of a complex set of tools for autonomy.² A good part of the effort has also been about reclaiming and making available more traditional convivial technologies such as the *sistema de tequio* (a community-defined work project), *sistema de cargo* (a community-determined, entrusted obligation for community renewal), and *asamblea* (Martínez Luna, 2010).

More recently, the collaboration between the Zapatistas and the National Indigenous Congress (CNI) produced a unique and very effective tool in the Indigenous Governing Congress (CIG), resulting in Indigenous communities across the country convened in permanent assembly and mobilized to disrupt the national electoral spectacle by putting forward María de Jesús Patricio (Marichuy) as the CIG spokesperson. More importantly, the gathering, or *conversatorio*, convened by the CNI and the Zapatistas, *Miradas, Escuchas y Palabras: ¿Prohibido Pensar?* (April 15-25, 2018) made it possible to collectively examine

2 The seven principles of *mandar obedeciendo* are: 1. to lead by obeying (*obedecer y no mandar*); 2. to represent; not replace (*representar y no suplantar*); 3. To work from below and not seek to rise (*bajar y no subir*); 4. to serve; not self-serve (*servir y no servirse*); 5. to convince; not conquer (*convencer y no vencer*); 6. to construct; not destroy (*construir y no destruir*); 7. to propose; not impose (*proponer y no imponer*).

the signature campaign to put Marichuy on the ballot and co-generate a collective ethnography narrating the multiple, intersecting violences impacting Mexico generally and Mexico's Indigenous communities in particular.

At the center of this new political energy, I argue, is a knowledge production that in the Zapatista hands operates as a civic pedagogy: a praxis that recognizes the critical importance of research and learning for horizontal, participatory democratic governance and organization. The future in the present is animated by learning and inquiry where participants can discover in a shared space how to re-learn the habits of assembly, reclaim processes of collective decision-making, and collaborate to find new ways to regenerate community through dignity, obligation, reciprocity, stewardship, and care. The Zapatista civic pedagogy explored here however is not a specific theory articulated or promulgated by the EZLN. Moreover, the Zapatistas have rejected the formal, dominant educational system and reclaimed autonomous processes of learning. As Raquel Gutiérrez proposes, the gesture here is to engage in the production of a theoretical strategy (Gutiérrez, 2012: 52). It is not an attempt to name an objective reality that can be put in service of a specific strategic purpose or organized effort. Rather, Zapatista civic pedagogy as a theoretical strategy gestures towards a 'practical comprehension' of what we might collectively agree on that is both a challenge and an opportunity of, in this case, a Zapatismo for emergent rebel communities to advance a kind of struggle that is not about 'taking power', but more of a commitment to explore a 'difficult ambivalent, and often contradictory itinerary or path' (Gutiérrez, 2012: 53). In this instance, the path that is co-constructed is animated by the Zapatistas' provocation to learn with others a new way of doing politics (El Kilombo, 2007).

Zapatismo and the war against subsistence

Elsewhere I have argued that the Zapatista politics of encounter has succeeded as a consistent strategy of facilitating broad, inclusive political spaces for dignified dialogue without directing the outcomes (Callahan, 2005). These interconnected spaces have been animated by what I have been calling an on-going convivial research and insurgent learning: a set of commitments that point to those moments where learning and research are recognized as integral to the radically democratic alternative we collectively construct in the moment. On a practical level, convivial research and insurgent learning are understood as emerging from or part of everyday knowing and doing. However, they can also be part of more elaborate processes of community regeneration: those moments where learning and research are deliberately part of political processes that seek to insure the consistent, informed participation of all members of an intentional community.

A primary example of this would be the network of assemblies that constitute a *caracol* and the JBG (Mora, 2017).

The encounter as a convivial tool, as well as the other convivial tools associated with it, take on a greater significance if we take up the Zapatista theorization of the 4th WW as an approach to analyze the continuation of an ongoing war against subsistence (Illich, 1981). The Zapatista praxis deliberately engages the 4th WW on the side of reclaiming subsistence and the vernacular, clearly embodying a deliberate effort to place themselves outside the disciplinary forces of a commodity-intensive society. The Indigenous communities that make up Zapatista communities throughout the autonomous zones continue to draw on the use-values that they defend against a capitalist social relation. In other words, while we want to observe how ‘workers’ refuse their imbrication into circuits of exchange value, we must also note how their refusal entails a reclaiming of practices and knowledges essential to use-values, that is, the vernacular.

As the war against subsistence rages, the political space that the Zapatistas hold against this war for a diversity of rebels, is a space, as Fred Moten and Stefano Harney argued, of displacement (Moten and Harney, 2013). Drawing on Moten and Harney, we might say it is a space of ‘bad debt’ – the space of sharing against the violence of commodity and the spectacle (Moten and Harney, 2013: 61). The space of encounter is a space of a radical alternative subjectivation, one generated through the reliance on vernacular knowledges, especially those around subsistence, but also the knowledges expressed in cultural practices of a fugitive sociality, spaces of displacement animated by a hapticality – that is a way of knowing that embraces knowing the other (Moten and Harney, 2013: 97-99).

Raúl Zibechi reminds us of the political potency of the lessons learned from these ‘zones of non being’, the zones where the disciplinary practices of consumer capitalism and all the mechanisms of control around debt, consumption, and media do not take root. ‘In these zones’, explains Zibechi, ‘social relationships are very different, heterogeneous, regarding the hegemonic’. Zibechi notes three major differences that are worth quoting at length:

The first difference is the hegemony of use value versus the dominance of exchange value in the zone of being... The second is the power found in community relations and reproduction of life versus individualism and production, that characterize the area of being [...] The third difference relates to the existence of multiple forms of labor: wages, reciprocity, slavery, servitude and familiar commercial ventures [...] The organized below is a world of strong attachments and trust that narrows the possibility of control by means of debt, for example, or marketing, where solidarities neutralize mechanisms of control. (Zibechi, 2016: par. 4-8)

Thus, the space of Zapatismo articulated through a series of encounters as theorized here is both the site of the dissolution of one relation, that is the relation produced through racial patriarchal capitalism and intertwined around property, value, commodity, labor, race, and patriarchy and the emergence of another, counter-relation articulated through the convivial, a relation maintained with a new modern tool kit oriented around holding space for learning together. Zapatista spaces of encounter engage those subjects that Brenna Bhandar explains as refusing the possessive individualism and possessive nationalism (Bhandar, 2018). Thus, Zapatista civic pedagogy offers potential alternatives to the liberal project and by extension the Western patriarchal consuming subject (Callahan, 2012).

UT Califas as convivial tool

In the context of this 4th WW, I have looked to the Zapatistas and their use of convivial tools, especially their forging of what I have taken to call a Zapatista civic pedagogy, a theoretical strategy I argue that brings into focus the Zapatistas' strategic use of convivial research and insurgent learning as essential devices for a radical democratic praxis. There are benefits in identifying some elements of Zapatismo as 'technologies' that can be claimed, shared, and embodied. In this last section, I want to examine more closely Uni-Tierra Califas, as an autonomous learning space in the San Francisco Bay Area committed to 'technology' transfer as part of an attempt to learn a new way of doing politics³ (Callahan, 2016).

As an alternative to a formal institutional space, UT Califas claims a social architecture that operates only when people gather; it only exists when convened. Thus, UT Califas should be understood much in the same way as the Aymara deploy their notion of a 'barracks' in their struggle for local autonomy which, according to Zibechei, 'are social relationships: organizational forms based on collective decision-making and the obligatory rotation of duty, but in a militarized state or, in other words, adapted to cope with violent assault' (Zibechei, 2010: 53-55). Each space UT Califas convenes is designed to assist in making autonomous praxis more legible.

3 UT Califas attempts to extend the network of autonomous learning spaces anchored by the two most prominent Uni-Tierra spaces, namely Universidad de la Tierra Oaxaca and Universidad de la Tierra Chiapas. Both Universidad de la Tierra 'campuses' in Oaxaca [<http://unitierraoax.org/>] and Chiapas [<http://seminarioscideci.org/>] have been at the center of many prominent political mobilizations that have had a national impact in Mexico and internationally over the last twenty-one years.

As a convivial tool, Uni-Tierra Califas contests industrial tools, such as the formal, institutional system of education, while facilitating a radically different social arrangement, one that guarantees for each member ample and free access to the larger space/project and the enrichment of both the project and the participant through his/her/their participation.

It is in this context that UT Califas subverts transmission pedagogies typical of traditional teaching and research institutions by refusing to organize organizers, teach teachers, or train trainers who claim a singular authority to bestow knowledge. A space that treats knowledge practices as essential to the construction of alternative social relations must necessarily avoid the 'explaining expert' and abandon any vestiges of 'teaching' where the presumption is that one person or group possesses expertise that others do not have and must acquire. We might also add, following Colectivo Situaciones, we want to bracket the authority often claimed by the 'sad militant', 'university researcher', and 'humanitarian activist' who often occupy activist spaces with the ambition of directing them (Colectivo Situaciones, 2005: 605).

Imagined as a node for the transfer of technology, UT Califas encourages the circulation of convivial technologies, as well as formal, dominant technologies that might still be used strategically in relation to the situated knowledges and rooted wisdoms of local struggles, and these excavated through formal and informal investigations. Here, 'technologies' suggests a difference between what is commonly associated with industrial and digital technologies and those convivial technologies that are generated through purposeful cooperation. The commitment to share technologies across struggle is symbolized by Uni-Tierra Califas' Center for Appropriated Technology, Language and Literacy Institute, occasional Theses Clinics, and any number of *talleres*, or workshops. Rather than only engage other struggles in an already determined solidarity mode, we ask what kind of convivial tools (e.g. *cargo*, *asamblea*, *tequio*, *faena*) can be made available and what do we need to do to organize ourselves to learn how these tools work, discover how they might be applied in different contexts, and assess whether or not we have been successful in our appropriation of them.

Generally speaking, UT Califas has been convened in a geography that has lost the habits of assembly, the obligations of *cargo*, and the determined efforts of *tequio*; it is for the most part social spaces overdetermined by what Illich named as the 'modernization of poverty', that is 'the community' no longer claims the

tools to convene and manage its maintenance.⁴ It is a socially mediated community overdetermined by commodity and the professionalization that insures a dependence on commodity-driven needs. In response, UT Califas activates a network pedagogy through a web of temporary autonomous zones of knowledge production (TAZKP), a constellation of spaces that make it possible to reclaim and re-construct a social infrastructure of community as it explores how to disrupt the ‘modernization of poverty’, refuse the ‘technological imperative’, and abandon the professionalization that unravels the social fabric and dismantles the social infrastructure of community (Illich, 1978; Illich, 2006). Reclaimed cultural practices/spaces including *tertulia*, *mitote* and *tianguis* as well as other spaces that are constructed as part of a more deliberate intervention, including *ateneos* and *coyunturas*, comprise UT Califas’ learning infrastructure. Each reclaimed cultural practice is subject to shifting meanings given class, gender, and race tensions peculiar to specific gatherings as well as the contexts in which each is convened. In keeping with a convivial itinerary, each cultural practice reclaims and politicizes the code that narrates it by re-deploying it for locally rooted political uses.

tertulia

A *tertulia* generally refers to neighbors who gather at an accessible public space, such as a pub or coffee house, to share news and information that affect the community. The most public and least formal of UT Califas’ concatenated spaces, the *tertulia* politicizes regular local gatherings often common to *barrios* as sites to generate and archive local histories of struggle. A consistent and accessible *tertulia* is a site of knowledge production where community members can exchange news and information and as a consequence develop projects, coordinate activities, facilitate networks, share resources, and promote and share research.

mitote

Often criminalized in the popular consciousness, the *mitote* works as a reclaimed public space of celebration convened to generate poetic and other situated knowledges that privilege arts, dance, and embodied research. *Mitote* is a code originally used by the Spanish to criminalize Indigenous resistance and what were perceived to be sinister, clandestine gatherings noted for debauchery and all manner of excess assumed to be the result of the liberal use of intoxicants. The celebration and declarations, to the Spanish, must have confirmed their worst

4 This claim would not be true of the transterritorial communities of say, for example, Oaxacalifornia. A good number of communities in Oaxaca and Chiapas extend beyond nation-state boundaries through the exercise of *cargo* and *tequio*, for example.

fears of an Indigenous disposition to subversion and reinforcing their constant worry of revolt. In this instance, the term has been re-appropriated to refer to a 'clandestine' gathering marked by ritualized celebration and sharing of knowledge between generations for community renewal.

coyuntura

The *coyuntura* draws from popular education practices inspired by the work of Paulo Friere and Ivan Illich, encouraging participants to generate language and new tools for struggle towards a shared analysis through a series of activities and reflection and action spaces. We approach *coyuntura* or *conjunctural analysis* as a category of analysis, a space for epistemological rupture, and as a space to actively produce new knowledges. *Coyuntura* links research, analysis, reflection, and action by encouraging participants to name, define, narrate, and act on the struggle that impacts them in the current conjuncture, or what Gustavo Castro calls the 'amplified present' (Castro and Lomeli, 1995, v. 5: 26-27) As an approach to analysis, *coyuntura* draws heavily on the major theoretical advances of various 'Marxisms' and 'post-Marxisms' to illuminate the intersections between structural and cultural forces operating in economic, political, social, and cultural contexts over time. *Coyuntura* can also refer to a gathering convened for the purpose of producing new knowledges by first generating an epistemological rupture—exposing the views, attitudes, values, and concepts that are taken for granted and that can prevent a group from listening to one another, arriving at a shared analysis, and constructing new tools to solve local, immediate problems (Castro Soto and Valencia Lomeli, 1995).

tianguis

In our culture, in the political culture that we need today the *tequio* (community work) and the *tianguis* (public markets), which were the hitching posts, must play an important role, because they are traditions, the political cultural traditions of resistance belonging to our continent, which have something to say in this history. (Zibechi, 2015)

A well-known cultural practice throughout Mexico, a *tianguis* refers to a small open-air market, or bazaar, where local community vendors and folks from the neighborhood gather to trade or sell goods and services. In the late Fall of 2014 UT Califas convened space where participants from across local groups imagined a Community Action Tianguis, gathering folks from and connected to San José's Mayfair community to share tools, strategies, and resources. In addition to specific booths, the *tianguis* provided space for organizations and projects to present their work and community members to share information about issues impacting the community with the goal of building toward a community-wide assembly. In particular, community members were increasingly confronted by

the privatization of public spaces and reduction of services, making it difficult for local community members to access local resources. For instance, several families who had organized a community soccer league were prohibited from using local fields due to excessive fees. As a gesture of occupying, local soccer teams competed on the adjacent soccer pitch throughout the *tianguis*.

ateneo

We deploy the *ateneo* as an open, diffuse space that facilitates insurgent learning and convivial research. The deployment of an *ateneo* as a strategy of oppositional learning and research draws historically on the Spanish anarchist community of the late 19th century; the resurgence with the alter-globalization struggle of ‘worker’ organized research projects and learning spaces; as well as horizontal autonomous practices associated with the social centers and the *okupas* active across Spain since the 1980s.

The *ateneos* of UT Califas meet monthly or bi-monthly in an established location for an established three-hour session. Prior to convening, an announcement is sent out situating current struggles and resistances. The *ateneo* advances a facilitation strategy rooted in agreements. Thus, each *ateneo* begins with a review of agreements often followed by a brief retelling of the history of the *ateneo*. Participants agree to share questions insuring the learning as horizontal and everyone is able to shape the conversation. These questions then serve as a point of reference and resonance against which the conversation unfolds beyond the actual gathering. Following the *ateneo*, a summary is written, circulated to all participants, and subsequently archived on the UT Califas website. Generally, a core group of four to five folks from various struggles and communities establishes the *ateneo* working in conjunction with UT Califas, and from there, invited community members from grassroots, academic, nonprofit, and other communities also join, together with comrades from other places. The *ateneos* always convene in public spaces, such as *cantinas*; according to Cecena:

In the cantina, people construct political programs and share resistance strategies...the people who come together in the social universe of the cantina also share their political sensibilities through talk. In the oral sphere of communication there is a constant interweaving of worldviews, and this exchange encourages intersubjective processes out of which emerges a collective subject that is strengthened in the anonymity of mediocre individuals. (Cecena, 2012: 116-117)

UT Califas has convened four *ateneos* since 2011. The Democracy Ateneo based in San José (2011-2018) interrogated the vexed and incomplete project of democratic promise, especially noting the failure of mainstream liberal institutions, as well as projects that have undermined such democratic promise historically and politically, including, for example, slavery, democratic despotism,

development, neoliberalism, militarized policing, low intensity war, and the (global) prison-industrial complex. Emerging not long after the Democracy Ateneo began, the Insurgent Knowledges Ateneo convened in San Francisco (2013-2014) with the specific focus of oppositional knowledges from different contexts. Alongside these two *ateneos*, the increased visibility in police violence prompted a third *ateneo*, namely the Social Factory *ateneo*, convened in Oakland (2014-2015) to interrogate state authored counterinsurgency operating through multiple intersecting agencies and strategies of violence, especially targeting women and families. Starting from our oppositions we recognize the consistent struggle over care. This prompted the Fierce Care Ateneo in Oakland (2016 – 2017). For us the notion of ‘fierce care’ is a concept that evokes the number of strategies that emerge in and through the social factory in opposition to the multiple, intersecting violences of capital (Callahan and Paradise, 2017).

tequio

The recent rise in police violence has motivated family members and survivors to mobilize the larger community to seek justice and document the ongoing resistance to police excess by a growing network of projects (Paradise, 2017). Working in conjunction with the *ateneos* and in response to local struggles on the ground, UT Califas convenes a number of spaces to advance *tequios de investigación*. Inspired by the community defense project of the Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas Human Rights Center of Chiapas, these have included *talleres*, or workshops, focused on community mapping and community timeline action projects, organized with local families from across the Bay Area and beyond who have lost loved ones to state violence. These can occur in an ‘appropriated space’ of a law school, a university classroom, a community center, an assisted living facility common room, or a local park, and makes use of a variety of mapping tools. The spaces of the *talleres* unfold adjacent to and interwoven with justice struggles challenging police violence in Stockton, San Francisco, San José, Berkeley, Oakland, and beyond. These recent *tequios* advance as part of a larger diffuse strategy of people’s investigations with the focus of community safety (Paradise, 2017). The *tequios* link open strategy meetings, rallies, workshops, community speak-outs, neighborhood assemblies, press conferences, banner and art making parties, direct action spaces such as *escraches*, municipal meeting ‘occupations’, as well as vigils, skill shares, *ateneos*, *tertulias* and various other spaces where the community gathers to organize collectives committed to political action. As interwoven TAZKP, these spaces create possibilities for community members situated across a broad spectrum of ‘fierce care’ as well as to encounter each other as political forces (Callahan and Paradise, 2017).

Taken together the spaces UT Califas convenes attempt to reclaim commons, regenerate community, and facilitate intercultural and intergenerational dialogues (Esteva and Prakash, 1998). Combined, they construct a complex and distributed ‘grassroots think tank’. They are critical sites of community repair, in the sense that they exist draw our collective attention to our position in commodity-intensive society, and the obstacle that the industrial mode of production poses for our autonomy. In this sense, the repair occurs through the collective effort of reweaving the ongoing work of social production and the effort to suture vernacular moments into a stronger web. The community architecture of interconnected TAZKP spaces is an experiment that explores efforts at de-professionalization and de-commodification along with attempts at more long-term practices of community regeneration. Ultimately it forms something of an ‘institution of the commons’ (Roggero, 2011). ‘These should not be thought of as ‘happy islands’, or free communities sealed off from exploitative relationships’ – explains Gigi Roggero in his attempt to situate ‘the commons’ in the current conjuncture:

Indeed, there is no longer an outside within contemporary capitalism. The institutions of the commons are the autonomous organization of living knowledge, the reappropriation of social wealth, and the liberation of the powerful forces frozen in the threadbare dialectic between public and private: black studies since the 1960s and the contemporary experiences of autonomous education, or self-education. (Roggero, 2011: 9)

Conclusion

Towards the end of *Tools for Conviviality*, Illich warns of an ‘inevitable catastrophic event’ and speculates that this ‘foreseeable catastrophe will be a true crisis’ (Illich, 2009b: 105). An authentic crisis is one, Illich insists, ‘that is, the occasion for a choice —only if at the moment it strikes the necessary social demands can it be effectively expressed’ (Illich, 2009b: 106). In engaging the crisis in order to anticipate its effects, we must investigate how sudden change can bring about the emergence into power of previously submerged groups. But we must examine the calamity more closely. ‘It is not calamity as such’, explains Illich, ‘that creates these groups; it is much less calamity that brings about their emergence; but calamity weakens the prevailing powers which have excluded the submerged from participation in the social process’ (Illich, 2009b: 105).

These ‘submerged groups’ that are increasingly more visible in the current moment are folks committed to a ‘conscious use of disciplined procedure that recognizes the legitimacy of conflicting interests, the historical precedent out of which the conflict arose, and the necessity of abiding by the decision of peers’ (Illich, 2009b: 106). For Illich, ‘the preparation of such groups is the key task of

new politics at the present moment' (Illich, 2009b: 106). This 'new politics' requires a new 'modern toolkit', one similar to that forged by the Zapatistas and claimed by those who struggle together to learn a new way of doing politics.

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