

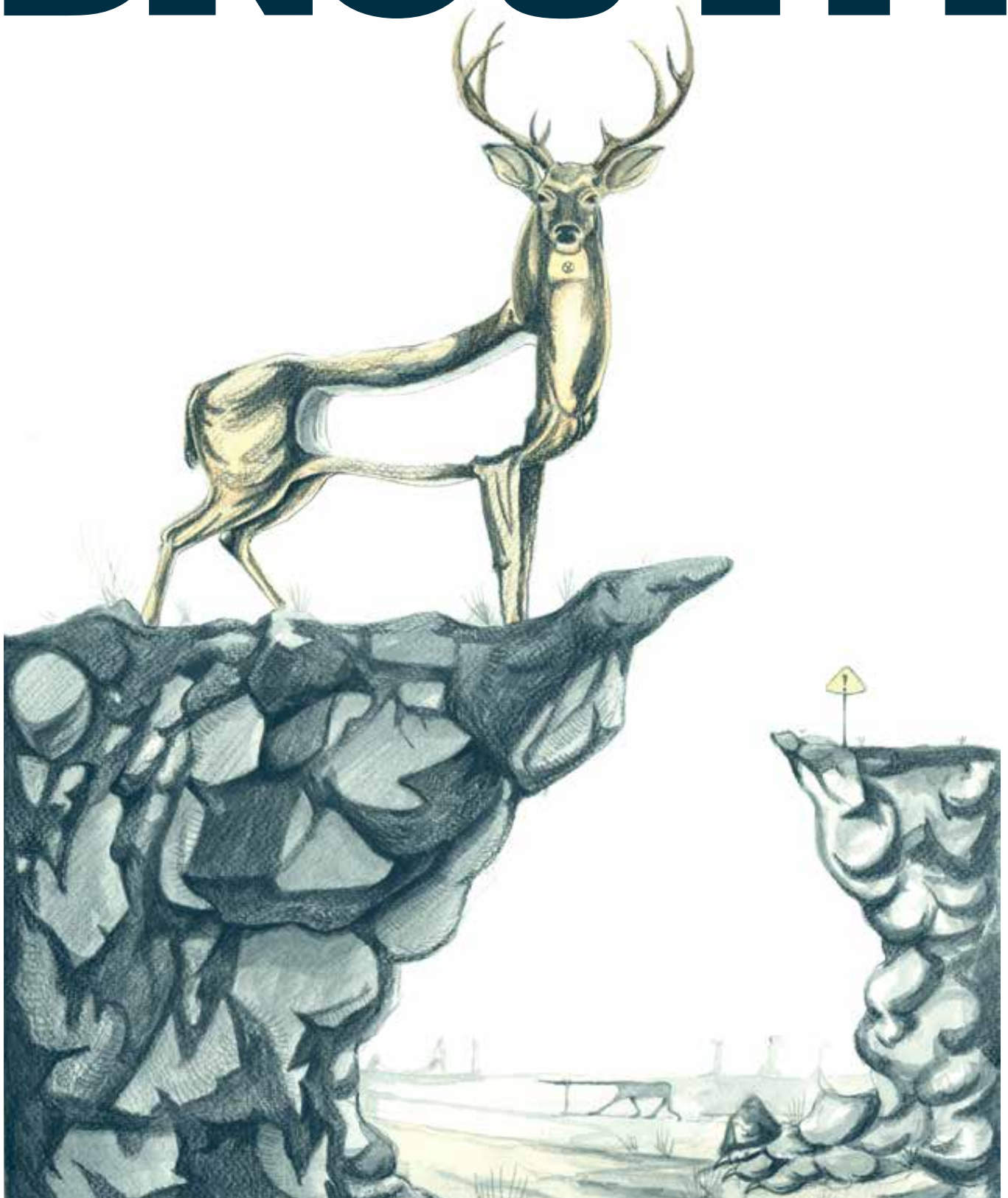
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Contents

Editorial	02
Vessel	
Juan Canela	04
Sometimes my heart	
Mitchell Miller	09
Unattractive Creatures	
Johnny Rodger	30
Foxy	
Iliana Fokianaki	32
Performing Citizenship	
David Archibald	36
Loach and Acting	
Ravi Sundaram	44
Post-colonial Sensory Infrastructure	
Barby Asante	50
Composition in Seven Parts	
Lionel Ruffel	59
A Dangerous Book	
Jesús Carrillo	70
A letter from Madrid	
Entrar Afuera	82
Entering Outside:Notes through Care & Art	
Owen Dudley Edwards	90
Macbeth: A Political Animal	
Johnny Rodger	112
What was <i>the Drouth</i> for?	



entrar
afuera



Entering outside! Notes through care and arts.

**By Research Group
*Entrar Afuera*¹**

¹ Entrar Afuera is a research collective, whose members are Marta Malo de Molina, Irene R. Newey, Marta Perez and Francesco Salvini.



Entrar Afuera (*Entering Outside*, 2016-2018) is a multi-site and multi-format dialogue among critical practices of healing and caring in the south of Europe. As a research group and common space beyond the authors of this article, we have been exploring and participating in practices of urban and social healthcare in Trieste (Italy) and Madrid (Spain), with some lateral engagement with practices in autonomous healthcare spaces in Thessaloniki (Greece), with feedbacks coming from across Europe as a whole. The goal, or better the aspiration, was that of contributing to a critical and innovative space emerging in the south of Europe, where to think how to transform the *function* – and the *functioning* – of the state. Concretely our question was how it would be possible to destabilise contemporary public policies and to rethink institutions and policies in relation to the commons of (urban) life.

A question that, we feel, can only be addressed in the trans-local scale: on one hand, being capable of reading the diagrams of governance beyond their specific and local iterations, exposing the global rationalities of government that public policies carry with them in each place; on the other hand, trying to produce alliances among situated practices, and to ignite a proliferation of those local inventions that resonate throughout the (southern) European space.

In this context, the project was an attempt to open a dialogue between institutional experiments moulded in the wake of the 1970s institutional critique, like those of deinstitutionalisation, radical psychiatry and emancipation in Trieste, with a series of contemporary movements that, facing the permanent attack of neoliberal forces against the welfare state, are trying to invent new forms of engagement with care, through autonomous organisation, institutional invasion or collective disobedience, especially in Madrid.

Our research tools were of two different kinds: first, and drawing on the rich tradition of militant research, we have engaged with critical practices of health and care, both within the institutional radical frame of the Trieste healthcare system, and with a constellation of practices for universal access to public healthcare and for communitarian healthcare in Madrid. Secondly, from this involvement, we have participated and contributed to critical reflections that were already taking place from within the practices. In order to animate this space of dialogue among sites and situated memories, we explored narratives and expressive forms that would make ourselves feel unstable, and in transformation.

Throughout this project, we have been moving through arts and care and the notes we propose here sit in-between these spaces: on the one hand, trying to recount an excursion, through arts, that engaged with concrete places and concrete practices; on the other hand, we are trying to reflect on a “becoming” political beyond-activism, where expressive forms have been a tool for us to experiment with new codes and modes of action.

Frame

In the wake of the financial crisis of 2008 and in the contemporary context of disarticulation of the southern European space, we find ourselves drawing transversal lines and constituting diagrams to publicly address those questions emerging from the decline of the Fordist model (and yet left unresolved by the neoliberal policies in the last decades).

How can we contribute, today, to strengthening a social antagonism against the tendency of institutions to dispossess the commons? Facing the cynical pragmatic of the contemporary welfare state and its neoliberal conversion, what sustainable practices can we institute to care for each other? How can we contribute to imagine institutional practices that sustain collective organisation, through both public investment and social emancipation? And what narrative forms can we explore to share and make these practices transversal, i.e. capable of breaking the segmentation of social struggle?

The space of southern Europe has been the surface of emergence of the crisis as a form of governance, but also the site of expression of other ways of doing: generative institutional ecologies, that are contradictory and ambivalent, situated on the threshold between the defence of public institutions and the invention of something different. At stake, along these limits, there is the possibility of a different practice of care in everyday life, and produced through the prism of the crisis. To actualise this possibility, concrete practices and alternative imagination have to encounter to institute new modes of recovery, not as normalisation, but as emancipation.

Sites

The sites we have been inhabiting, and the practices we have been encountering in Trieste and Madrid, have been spaces of organisation and invention for a long time now. Our participation in them, also, goes beyond the specific practices of this project, starting before it and hopefully going beyond it.

Trieste constitutes a forty years long practice of radical public policies in the field of healthcare and an emancipatory form of regulation and governance of welfare policies, today. It can be addressed as a “singular governmentality” that, in the last decades, has been practically experimenting with a different logic and functioning of the state-machine in healthcare, or, using Timothy Mitchell terminology, with the state-effect on people’s life. The experimentation of Trieste starts from the psychiatric asylum. In Trieste, in 1971 there were 1.300 inmates, to whom freedom and dignity were denied, on whom violence and torture were allowed. More than a hundred thousand across Italy. This situation of segregation and violence triggered one of the most important and radical movements in Italy, initiated by Franco Basaglia and others, that led to “the destruction of the psychiatric hospital”.

In 1978, the Italian legislation granted to close all asylums; internment was forbidden; civil, social and political rights were recognised to the “loonies”. After the dismantlement of the Psychiatric Hospital in the late 1970s, 24/7 local centres decentralised care, and social cooperatives were organised with the support of the Department of Mental Health. Educational grants, community budgets, economic mechanisms and housing projects supported the urban life of users. Since the early 2000s, this logic of care, affirmed by the Basaglian movement, has become a governing force of the social healthcare system of Trieste and the Friuli Venezia Giulia in general. This site of radical community healthcare is where our research sits, in dialogue with the workers and users of a specific programme of local and integrated welfare for the most vulnerable neighbourhoods of the city.

In Madrid, the sites have been both institutional and activist ones, taking charge of the difficulties in articulating practices and approaches to health and care that try to dismantle the boundaries of the inside and the outside of institutions. In this attempt, we transit between arts, local institutions promoting new policies of community healthcare, and social mobilisations. First, we constructed a dialogue with collective and individual actors linked to the struggles for the universal access to healthcare, raised through the wave of the *indignadas* mobilisations after the 15th of May 2011, and in the wake of the violence of the crisis. On the other hand, we have proposed moments of encounter with the local council, that is trying to strengthen the community practices of the Municipal Centres for Health. The National Museum Centre for Arts Reina Sofia has been another significant actor, supporting and hosting our project, and there we hope to keep developing this dialogue about institutional critique beyond arts and culture.

It also has been the opportunity to keep developing a dialogue among different generation of active citizens, that gives us a different perspective on our present, but also allows to reinforce this alliance. On the one hand, those struggles for public health that arose in the aftermath of the dictatorship and in the explosion of democracy, in the early 1980s. On the other, those experiences that today, in the long twilight of the democratic transition, are articulating against the dismantlement of public services. At stake is not only the defence of public services but also the possibility of inventing other modes of care and other logics of health, making explicit the war between the neoliberal logics of management and measuring around healthcare, and the logics that look at health as a collective production, inseparable from the life worlds and the domination structures.

Practices

In this trans-local laboratory, the project has been the exploration of the practices, of the tensions as well as the resonances among the two sites, and finally the collective research of modes of expression and narrative, to share these encounters.

We articulated this dialogue through video-letters among the different actors, resulting from collective workshops in each place during which we listened to materials and concepts proceeding from the other site. We have been traveling between Trieste and Madrid, organising public debates and making interviews along the way, to create a milieu of voices around the video-letters. At the same time, we wrote some minor chronicles to give our point of view on the debates we were organising and participating in. We also asked some friends, activists and comrades to look at these materials from the margin, in the attempt to open cracks and allow other voices to enter in the discussion. We are presenting this ensemble of pieces, together with some archival materials, as an open website that will be available in June 2018: at the same time an open catalogue and a common archive. Here we share some reflection about the project and we invite those that are reading to visit our web: entrarafuera.net.

Our research practices found their roots in two significant debates: first, militant research as situated and partisan production of knowledge, whose practice is not looking for a neutral position from where to describe and prescribe. Militant research is rather participating in a common activation of processes of knowledge production, where the practice of critique is constitutive of a social practice of care. Second, these critical positions trespassing the limit of the institutional autonomy pushed us to dialogue with the contemporary waves of institutional critique in the articulation of an institutional engagement with a mobilised society: how to rethink the institutional space as an active space for the production of policies and practices beyond the mechanism of normalisation and regulation typical of the institutional practice.

Arts

The palimpsest of these voices brings us back to the discrepancies and distances among the places and the actors, but also with a common struggle: a struggle that does not exist *a priori*, but that emerges through the comparing and sharing of practices. The resonances among the places give us clues about how we can care in the crisis and how to imagine a recovery that is emancipation. We propose here to analyse it as a common archive, the research as affirmation of shared values and share goals. But also, our objective has been that of constituting an instituent and autonomous space, capable of developing beyond the temporary mediation of the research project: an open catalogue.

Commoning archives and opening catalogues has been our attempt to contribute to the critique of the museum as modern and total institution, but also to the marketisation of arts as commodification of social practices. In the Museum Reina Sofia, which supported this project together with other institutions such as Cooperativa La Collina and Conferenza Basaglia, we encountered a resonance, especially in its critical practice on “public heritage” and the “collection”.

First, we have tried to play with the production of the “archive” of social practices not as a process of *abstraction*, where the artefact is separated from its social production and analysed in the autonomy of aesthetic or social theory. Rather we tried to articulate it as a collective practice of analysis, discussion and proposal. To disarticulate the tendency of institutional practice and look at society as a “natural theatre” while, on the contrary, affirming that social practices are collective oeuvres, as proposed by Henri Lefebvre, that produce politics, aesthetics and institutions.

Second, the attempt has been to produce the archive not as a *dispossession* of the common social production, that privatises social artefacts by closing them up in institutional space (the hospital or the museum), and preserves the social capacity of appropriation, both instituting alliances among the actors beyond the project, but also to make the materials of our project into an open catalogue that can be used and translated in other contexts, struggles, and experiments. And this has been true for us as

well, since we are left with new alliances and new questions to explore, as a result of, but also beyond this process.

At the same time, the institutional practices we encountered in Trieste and Madrid concretely expose a crucial question of contemporary institutionality: the question of management as a permanent contradiction of taking charge of institutional responsibility, breaking the double bind between welfare paternalism, as denial of autonomy, and the neoliberal activation of New Public Management, as an individualist logic of autonomy.

At stake in the contradiction is the possibility of inhabiting the institutional field to support a different way of organising social life as radical emancipation and communal appropriation. Pushing the contradiction means therefore to look every day for the elements of crisis in the institution itself, and to start from the assumption that institutions never existed as instituted and given artefact. The institutional practice is therefore a permanent process of instituting collective forms to respond to social needs, in permanent change, in a sustainable manner.

Entering outside has been the attempt of opening a dialogue among different modes of social production of care: not to identify objectives or reference points, but rather to build tools and devices in the common challenge of building a sustainable ecology in which to live.

Open questions

Some questions guided our research and, still, we are left with them as open questions, at the end of our journey. We didn't solve any problem, but we surely learned new ways to stay with the troubles and qualify the questions we posed at the beginning of this essay. Crucially, how to democratise the production of public policies, beyond a mere consultative or deliberative participation? But also, how the materiality of institutional practices, and not just the governmental power, can be the leverage to transforms the modes of acting of the state in the everyday life of the city?

In the practices that we encountered, and in their pragmatic trespassing of continuous contradictions, the paradigms of action are never disciplinary diagrams. They rather emerge as critical essays of other ways of doing. Practices immersed in the crisis, they break the modern logic of accumulation – of power and value. They sustain social modes that invent new institutional spaces, sitting on the threshold between society and the state. The *instituent* as radical transformation of what the institution tend to crystallise, but also as invention of something completely new: deinstitutionalisation and invention, one day after the other.

The practice of care never rests after inventing something, declaring that the revolution is winning. It is a practice in which destruction and invention are related to the interdependency of cycles, lives: always related to its own sustainability, and at the same time with its radical transformation, in a social, environmental and subjective context in constant evolution. Care is not the historical accumulation and stratification of an institutional practice that resolves problems. It is an ecology of forces, matters and affects. An assemblage of contingent and situated implications, in which agents, objects, memories and perceptions configure recovery as a common venture of care. Care is not about the recovery of the individual body, to make it productive again, but the permanent pursuit of ways to nurture and enjoy lives that are, without exception, finite.

Suspended upon this fragile threshold that is our grotesque present, we do not face modernity just as rigid crystallisation of relations of domination, discrimination and violence, but also as a contingent and ambivalent site where other possibilities are trapped. The contemporary, as unstable limit of modernity, leaves us with the contradictory challenge of displacing the real, inhabiting thresholds of radical change on the edge of the catastrophe.

Moving through the contemporary, among arts and cares, between Trieste and Madrid, among crisis, recovery and emancipation, we encountered sites, actors, practices and concepts in our research, that concretely imagine an elsewhere to live with. In one of our interviews, one worker said: "What if all these structures were properly put into value? And if we could put into value the relationship between these structures and the people. What if we recreate these crossing points, this new alliance, between the designated institutions and the people? We could really imagine that the citizens constitute themselves as those that have the right to care, and that this care is a responsibility of the city: a city that cares for every single one of its citizens and that, by doing so, constitutes citizenship and constitutes itself as a city". And concludes: "The strategies to make it happen are clear, now it is time to begin".

