



Socially engaged art proposals: between collaboration, affect, and the commons¹

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Abstract: This paper presents some aspects of socially engaged art proposals, such as collaborative methods, affective relationships, and the production of the common. Currently, we observe in transdisciplinary projects and collective actions a growing focus on collaborative practices as attempts to go beyond practices strictly engrained in established institutional spaces such as museums, universities, and governmental or private spaces. With the perspective of a certain local activation of collective pieces of knowledge and practices, these artistic proposals aim at the circulation of knowledge, its integration and contamination by unusual places, narratives and methodologies belonging to each daily life. Therefore, we find in socially engaged artistic practices artistic interventions that highlight the power of affects for the production of knowledge managed in communities, making us think about what relationships consist of and how they may or may not give space for the common. We understand that by considering the power of affects and art in their political and social dimensions, we incorporate a discourse of difference that allows for other possible forms of communal living.

Keywords: Socially engaged art; collaborative practices; affects; commons; collective.

ES Propuestas de arte socialmente comprometido: entre la colaboración, el afecto y los comunes

Resumen: Este artículo presenta algunos aspectos de propuestas artísticas socialmente comprometidas, como los métodos colaborativos, las relaciones afectivas y la producción de lo común. Actualmente, observamos en proyectos transdisciplinarios y acciones colectivas un enfoque creciente en las prácticas colaborativas como intentos de ir más allá de las prácticas estrictamente arraigadas en espacios institucionales establecidos como museos, universidades y espacios gubernamentales o privados. Con la perspectiva de una cierta activación local de saberes y prácticas colectivas, estas propuestas artísticas apuntan a la circulación del conocimiento, su integración y contaminación por lugares, narrativas y metodologías insólitas propias de cada vida cotidiana. Por lo tanto, encontramos en las prácticas artísticas socialmente comprometidas intervenciones artísticas que resaltan el poder de los afectos para la producción de conocimiento gestionado en comunidades, haciéndonos pensar en qué consisten las relaciones y cómo pueden o no dar espacio a lo común. Entendemos que al considerar el poder de los afectos y el arte en sus dimensiones políticas y sociales, incorporamos un discurso de diferencia que permite otras formas posibles de convivencia.

Palabras clave: Arte socialmente comprometido; prácticas colaborativas; afectos; comunes; colectivo.

Sumario: 1. Introduction, 2. Affects and collaboration, 3. Socially engaged art, 4. The collective and the common, 5. Conclusions. References

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1. Introduction

When we speak of collaborative practices in general, there is a certain tendency to pigeonhole them according to disciplinary focus, such as sociology, psychology, anthropology, or digital humanities. However, we have observed an increasing number of collaborative artistic proposals involving communities, that transform collaboration into a problematising concept and an aesthetic element of the artwork itself. Thus, when bringing collaborative practices to the field of arts, it is unavoidable that we question the resulting aesthetic conception woven of collaboration, affects, community, and the commons.

In the field of the arts, we observe an expansion of collaborative practices in transdisciplinary and socially engaged artistic proposals that, in a certain way, lead us to think about other ways of being together, about other ways of networked, heterogeneous agency through emerging technologies, about other ways of perceiving reality and collectively producing ethical-aesthetic objects, about other aesthetic and political praxis sustained in the experiences of producing worlds. If “art is always there to open the world, to open the world to itself, its possibility of the world, its possibility of opening meaning, while the meaning that is already given is closed” (Nancy, 2014, p. 25, our translation), we point out correspondences between contemporary collaborative collective practices that permeate various areas of knowledge, and those that have been produced transdisciplinarily in artistic fields.

As such, when we turn to transdisciplinary artistic practices engaged with the social, we investigate alternative ways of living together that transcend economic models sustained by private property, exclusionary moral standards, institutional control practices, and rationalist and competitive models. We aim to approach practices that are animated by the affects of bodies, by the Spinozian passion of joy of being together, by the politics of affects, and by the micro-politics of everyday life open to participatory and collaborative processes that validate singular and collective affective relationships. By addressing collaborative aspects of art, we problematise some principles that govern biopolitical controls in contemporary social relations, such as the approach to collective creation practices, affective encounters, and the production of the common in communities.

Working with these ideas, we explore the interplay between affects and collaborative actions, highlighting the intrinsic relationship between the two. Affects involve physical relationships that may either enhance or detract from collaborative practices. We then illustrate how these practices are integrated into the arts, giving rise to a domain known as socially engaged art. We present various examples of socially engaged art to explore the implicit affective relationships with communities and the collaborative processes that emerge from them. Through this exploration, we challenge traditional perceptions of the social, communities, and collaboration, introducing the notion of the collective. This concept critiques the idea of an isolated, substantialized, and individuated *self* proposing instead that the common and the transindividual are outcomes of collective processes.

Consequently, this article seeks to delve into the realm of socially engaged art by examining several facets of artistic proposals. These include the local activation of collective knowledge and practices, the circulation of knowledge, and its integration and enrichment by unique locales, narratives, and methodologies embedded in everyday life. In doing so, we uncover artistic interventions within socially engaged practices that underscore the influence of affects in generating community-managed knowledge and highlight the political and social dimensions of affects and art.

2. Affects and collaboration

Although as mentioned above, there is a wide range of research on collaborative practices involving communities, we will focus our attention on affect as the knowledge produced from the encounters of bodies and as that which moves such experiences. We intend to delve in modes of encounter in which knowledge distinguished by the absence of grand narratives is produced according to a non-discursive order, and which is immediated by passions, complicities, and empathies.

According to Brian Massumi, “There seems to be a growing feeling within media, literary, and art theory that affect is central to an understanding of our information— and image-based late capitalist culture, in which the so-called master narratives are perceived to have foundered” (Massumi, 2002, p. 27). Image-based grand narratives are hegemonic discourses that close in on themselves into static categories and fail to address the shared collaborative collective experiences that go into creating them.

To this more considered view of affects, Patricia Clough (2007) has identified an *affective turn* in the human and social sciences, considering the body and emotions in current artistic productions. The affective turn calls for a transdisciplinary approach to theory and method that necessarily invites experimentation in capturing the co-functioning of political, economic, and cultural change, making it affectively an alternative in the development of affective capacity. (Clough, 2007).

To think the development of affective capacity implies systemic paradigms that require transdisciplinary approaches. Michael Hardt discusses affective labour, relating theories and practices that involve the affects to “understand simultaneously the corporeal and intellectual aspects of the new forms of production, recognising that such labour engages at the same time in the realm of rational intelligence and in the realm of passions and feelings” (Hardt, 2015, p. XII, our translation).

Thus, one can broaden the notion and content of knowledge beyond rational ideas by contemplating affective aspects. Massumi (2002), Clough (2007) and Hardt (2015) urge us to think in terms of modes of knowledge that do not strictly adhere to rational or ideological disciplinary criteria, to instead problematise the role of affects, passions, and desire in social, economic, political, and cultural spheres. Practices that

turn in on themselves, including humans and non-humans, in the production of knowledge that starts from the affects of bodies, from what stimulates bodies to be together, from the passions involved in the doings, from the enchantments and deliveries that exist before any word is agreed upon. “We are not building a competitive relationship. It is sufficient to admit that working together and performing activities with others, as shared practices, requires gestures that are more empathic than rigorous and more affective than surgical” (Lafuente; Cancela, 2016, p. 9, our translation).

By sustaining our vision of how knowledge is produced collectively from the affects of bodies, we understand that art is beyond of representation, is art of affects (Grosz, 2007). Art of affects, of the machinic productions of bodies, of the modes of operations and modulations between bodies and ideas, thus we discuss how socially engaged art proposals can create encounters and situations for affects to be potentialized (Oliveira, 2020).

Starting from the premise that works of art, in their contemplative, participatory, interactive, and collaborative instances, always result from affective relationships: Deleuze and Guattari (1992) contend that artworks constitute blocks of affects and percepts. Art proposes situations and experiences which heighten affect and intensify the experience of spacetime in the moment. It is not a matter of representing or signifying affects since we can only experience them (O’Sullivan, 2001). We can only be aware of some ideas we have about affects generated in the encounter of bodies.

An affect that is called a Passion [*pathema*] of the Mind is a confused idea by which the Mind affirms of its Body, or some part of it, a greater or lesser power of existing [*existendi vis*] than before, which, when it is given determines the Mind to think of this rather than that (Spinoza, 2009, p. 152).

Intensifying affect is about experiencing life in the present, putting the mind where the body is, sensing the pulsations of life in bodies, and feeling that they touch and connect by affecting each other. The affects do not belong to the personal level, they are not fixed in an isolated being, they are not personal emotions of the order of the Self that differentiates itself and overlaps with the Other. Affect are of the order of the multitude composed of connected singularities, it is the ability of bodies to connect, the capacity to affect and be affected, according to Spinoza (2009). In this sense, we diverge from the Cartesian maxim “I think, therefore I am,” since, in a Spinozian perspective, we only exist in the affect arising from encounters of bodies. We need others to give existence to ourselves; we need other bodies to generate affect and, consequently, ideas-thoughts. Thus, affect (me), therefore I am.

Art affects bodies to produce singular ideas that materialise in shared actions (objects, performances, happenings, collaborative practices). “Affect is not only an experiential force, it can become a material thing, and as such, as Deleuze describes, it can compel systems of knowledge, history, memory and circuits of power” (Colman, 2005, p. 11). Starting from the idea that encounters happen in various ways, we realise that there are multiple modes of producing affects according to specific situations, such as those arising from collaborative artistic proposals. The artwork as a block of affect becomes an affective experience.

Therefore, supporting our notion of affect in Spinoza (2009), we emphasise, firstly, that a body only exists in the presence of another body; secondly, that body and soul exist autonomously, but in an inseparable and parallel way; and thirdly, the power to act of each being is found in the capacity of bodies to affect and be affected. According to Spinoza (2009), there is a parallelism between the affect of bodies and the ideas of souls. Body and soul are not pre-existing substances, but attributes of equal value. They are different in nature – the body is a mode of extension and the soul is a mode of thought, and the more capable the body is of being affected, the more corresponding ideas it will have, i.e., even though the affect of the body cannot be known, since affect are ideas without representation, the ideas constructed and rationalised depend on how the body is capable of affecting and being affected (Oliveira, 2010). Hardt states that

The power of the mind to think corresponds to its receptivity to external ideas; and the power of the body to act corresponds to its sensitivity to other bodies [...] The growth of the subject’s autonomy, in other words, always corresponds to the growth of its receptivity (Hardt, 2015, p. X – XI, our translation).

Similarly,

it is not at all a matter of giving privilege to the body over the mind; it is a matter of acquiring knowledge of the powers of the body in order to discover, in a parallel fashion, powers of the mind that escape consciousness” (Deleuze, 1988, p. 90).

Consciousness, even if necessary, is a reduced faculty in the face of the intensive forces that traverse the bodies and inhabit the ideas.

According to Spinoza (2009), idea and affect are always interconnected; however, it is not us who have ideas, but ideas that succeed in us based on the affect of bodies. Therefore, collaborative action cannot exclude what happens with the bodies and fixate on preconceived ideas or predetermined meanings. Signification is a kind of complex affective function, the effect of affects (O’Sullivan, 2001). Spinoza formulates the body as a new model for understanding life, always interconnected with the soul, as particles in motion and at rest (Oliveira, 2020).

The artist does not want to represent an idea; they want to share in their proposal what affects their body, as well as the percepts they dazzle; they want to invent ways of feeling and perceiving. Therefore, “we can think of the aesthetic power of art in an *immanent* sense – through the recourse of the notion of *affect*”

(O'Sullivan, 2001, p. 125). In the immanence of events, affects are produced, as affects are “precisely an event or happening. Indeed, this is what defines the affect” (O'Sullivan, 2001, p. 127).

It is what happens in the here and now, what makes an encounter an event, and what is known but cannot be described: affects. Simultaneously, they produce correlated ideas and passions.

Therefore, what defines a body is the set of affective relations. This power to affect and be affected can increase or decrease the potency of bodies, and be favoured or hindered, according to the passions of joy or sadness. In this sense, Spinoza (2009) speaks of two ways of living based on two primary affects: joy or sadness. They are not mere feelings, but potencies of action: joy increases the potency of action of bodies since it composes them in good encounters; while sadness decreases the potency of action since it decomposes bodies in bad encounters. There is a *qualitative opposition of modes of existence* in which there is a polarisation between the practices of living: free man, strong, in joy or impotent, slave, in sadness. Joy and sadness are related to good and bad encounters that potentiate the body's action according to the ideas one has. Any object whose relationship is composed in convenience with my body will be understood as good; on the contrary, everything that decomposes mine in a relationship of inconvenience will be understood as bad. (Spinoza, 2009). That is,

(...) when two bodies meet there is a meeting between two dynamic relationships: either they are indifferent to each other, or they are compatible and together compose a new relationship, a new body; or rather they are incompatible and one body decomposes the relationship of the other, destroying it, just as a poison decomposes the blood. (Hardt, 1996, p.148, our translation).

In this sense, what matters to Spinoza is not what one lives, but how much and how one lives (Oliveira, 2010), understanding living from the collective relations of bodies. There is a *quantitative distinction of power* that differentiates existences in terms of relative individual intensities, that is, what differentiates them is how much one lives, how much one expresses the intensive power of living, or rather, how much one intensifies relations and their degrees of expressing singularities.

Thus, Spinoza's philosophy is about an Ethics that aims to potentiate intensities through the singularities of living, rather than a Morality that is linked to generalities, universalities, and value judgments about the *qualitative differences of existences*. It does not inquire as to what is right or wrong in life, but rather to adequate what heightens or attenuates life. Each existence lives as it can according to its intensive power and not according to a pre-established ideal model external to its experience (Oliveira, 2010), or to models that enslave it to power relations.

In conclusion, we address practices that aim to promote good encounters in their collective and collaborative proposals, conditions that foster the joy of being together in a certain place and time, in the here and now of an experience; which provoke us to “detach ourselves from our prejudices and let ourselves be affected by what others want to express” (Lafuente, Cancela, 2016, p. 9, our translation). Practices that create situations that instigate an increase in the powers of action of bodies and, consequently, of ideas; that perceive collaboration as an opportunity to compose with other bodies. To collaborate is to be together body and soul in practices that bring us closer together (Oliveira, 2020).

3. Socially engaged art

Collaborative art practices involving the participation of the public and the search for the activation of affects of bodies, have been used since the Dadaist proposals of the 1930s, the performances and happenings of the 1960s/1970s, to the panoply of collaborative works being created nowadays. These practices belong to plural and heterogeneous arts in the present day, since

(...) there is no art but the arts, there are multiple and heterogeneous practices, irreducible to one another, singular and plural, blended, combinable or articulable. There are, therefore, several arts, whose boundaries are in turn mobile and mutable, boundaries that shift and transform in the very act of creation, and in the course of the works and through them. (Nancy, 2014, p. 12, our translation).

By expanding the very frontier of the arts, collaborative art proposals, or socially engaged art proposals, open up possibilities for the inclusion of other practices that until then had remained outside the artistic sphere – activity that, on the one hand, provokes a certain revision of artistic canons and their bases of support, and, on the other, create dialogues with emerging transdisciplinary practices encompassing other fields of knowledge (Oliveira, 2020).

The art of the 1960s and 70s reminds us of the participatory mode of the public, which emphasises experience, and combines life and work on the same plane. Through his proposals in his *Happenings and Practical Activities*, that aspire to create other ways of perceiving, experiencing and communicating, Allan Kaprow¹ examines everyday behaviours and habits, seeking the active participation of the spectator rather than a passive observation, aiming for correspondence between art and everyday life, since, as he proclaims, “everything is art, art is everything”. He started out making mutant environments as installations, after which he used the very surroundings of everyday life as milieus for environmental works that demanded the experimental participation of spectators.

Collaborative proposals with a focus on social interaction in which the intention of the artist blends with the intention of the community, have been carried out more frequently in the last fifteen years. (Kester, 2011). In Spain from the 1970s on, various artists and collectives have been questioning media structures as well as exploring the possibility of creating other communication spaces (physical and online) in favour of

democratisation and socialisation. The following works are of particular significance: *Cadaqués Canal Local* (1974) and *Distrito Uno* (1976) by Antoni Muntadas; *Peninsulares* (1996) by Maite Cajaraville; and the *collectives Video Nou / Servei de Vídeo Comunitari* (1977-1983) and *Espacio "P"/Madrid* (1981-1997) (Ohlenschläger, 2009, our translation). Proposals that start from reciprocal processes between bodies involved in proposing good encounters, "an intensely somatic form of knowledge: the exchange of gesture and expression, the complex relationship to habitus and habit, and the way in which conflict, reconciliation, and solidarity are registered by the body". (Kester, 2006, p. 31).

American art theorist Grant Kester has written about collaborative art based on dialogical aesthetics and relational and collective practices. In such proposals, he investigates what occurs in these relationships, the communicative interactions that artists consider relevant, distinguishing political and social activism from collaborative artworks. In these, artists seek to activate a relational potential "not through the manipulation of representational codes in painting or sculpture, but through processes of dialogue and collaborative production" (Kester, 2004, p. 153). In this way, collaborative artistic proposals differ from object-based practices.

In this perspective, the Mexican artist and educator Pablo Helguera² situates his production as socially engaged art, creating the works: *Shedhalle* (2003), *Ellis Island* (2006), *The Seven Bridges of Königsberg* (2008), *Ælia Media* (2011), *Librería Donceles* (2013), among others. He questions how a socially engaged work of art can continue beyond the participation of the artist; he mentions the need for the existence of contracts between the participants of the work, being personal contracts, installed alliances, and complicities between the bodies. Helguera has been conducting interviews with communities about local memories and issues, in various countries from Alaska to Chile. By bringing the community together in common situations, he creates opportunities for them to engage in something in the production of the common, recognising the proposal of interaction presented and the space left for their particular experiences. His work is made up of the process itself, the workshops held, the archives generated and shared, the objects built, and the books published (Oliveira, 2020).

According to Helguera, SEA (socially engaged art) is multidisciplinary activity, between art and non-art, and hypothetical social action (Helguera, 2011). In socially engaged art, the artist, contexts, structures that are receptacles for communities to meet, spaces for events to take place, and which allow memory to be produced collectively through communication.

The Austrian collective Wochen Klausur³ has worked for more than 20 years in an advisory capacity on projects in Italy, Japan, Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. In 1994, they proposed an intervention in government drug policy by offering dozens of walks around Lake Zurich to open up spaces for conversation between different social agents, involving sixty key figures from Zurich: politicians, journalists, sex workers and activists. Creative actions of this type involve promoting socio-political relations that result in concrete actions, such as constructing a lodging house for sex workers to have a safe place to stay. (Kester, 2004). The Wochen Klausur collective creates situations in which new affects are generated and new idea-affects are produced. Situations that "emphasise the importance of involving the community of those affected from the beginning, as well as the importance of knowing how to react and adapt the project to the circumstances". (Lafuente, Cancela, 2016, p. 14, our translation). Situations provoked by the artists and subsequently made effective through collective performances that make political subjects emerge, give continuity to the proposals without the involvement of the artists (Oliveira, 2020).

Concrete actions are not the result of an *a priori* objective; individuals did not come together to reach a solution for the construction of the lodging house; we cannot reduce the artistic proposal to the concrete solution of an already posed problem. Collaborative work is processual, so putting people in a different place, producing a certain type of deterritorialisation, seeking a certain level of vulnerability among all, shifting social roles, are conditions to open relationships to affects, empathies, and passions, taking them out of previous hegemonic and homogeneous discourses. A certain contingency is necessary, a certain situation proposed, since

Affect is situational: eventfully ingressive to context. Serially so: affect is *trans-situational*. [...] It is pre- and post-contextual, pre- and post-personal, an excess of continuity invested only in the ongoing: its own. Self-continuity across the gaps. Impersonal affect is the connecting thread of experience. (Massumi, 2002, p. 217).

Bodies, situations, and ideas mix in such a way that the personal submerges in the impersonal, in the common to all. In the project, *Affective DNA kamê and kanhru*⁴ (2018), Kalinka Mallmann and Joceli Sales work on cultural appreciation with indigenous children from the *Kaingang Terra do Guarita* community (EEIEF Gomecindo Jete Tenh Ribeiro), based on audiovisual workshops (Fig. 1). The actions begin with a walk, recognising the community's territory, and identifying the *Kamê* and *Kanhru* families. Subsequently, the children made drawings on tablets about such recognitions, "such as shared experiences, which allow echoing various subjective meanings and giving value to relationships". (Mallmann, 2018, p. 57, our translation). This project engaged a diverse group of participants, featuring artist Kalinka Mallmann, aboriginal representative Joceli Sales, Kaingang children and village elders, alongside students and teachers from the community school.

² <http://pablohelguera.net>

³ <https://www.wochenklausur.at/projwahl.php?lang=en>

⁴ https://www.ufsm.br/laboratorios/labinter?page_id=143



Figure 1. Audiovisual Workshops from the *Affective DNA kamê and kanhru Project*, 2016. (Copyright LabInter)

The activated knowledge about local culture, later attributed to visibility, arises from a collectively acquired consent, through relationships of respect, acceptance, and trust established among the participants, in other words, through the power of affects that knowledge is generated (Oliveira, 2020).

Some steps that took place during the *Affective DNA kamê and kanhru* project were firstly, there was “a conscious direction towards the other, we can also speak of a social engagement that is formed through art. There is a desire to produce a collaborative work in art linked to social issues, which starts from the proponent”. (Mallman; Oliveira; Pereira, 2019, p. 134, our translation). We are affected by any situation, territory or bodies. Ideas and affects had already been produced in previous experiences, which, later, in this project was realised in the desire to be with the *Kaingang* community and the choices for the theme *kamê and kanhru*, their actions in the community, the time dedicated, the use of digital technologies and the products generated. The artist’s own performance needed to be reviewed, “given that the fostering that guides a collaborative proposal in art directly concerns the local groups and communities in question, the artist tends to give up the autonomy related to the making, providing more voice to these groups” (Mallman; Oliveira; Pereira, 2019, p. 142, our translation). This shared authorship in the project development process extends to its documentation and visualisation. “Which means thinking of the production of affects also as the production of codes, information, ideas and images” (Hardt, 2015, p. XII, our translation) that are shared with the community.

By involving digital technologies in networks, we can mention the Spanish collective Platoniq built the *Banco de Conocimiento Comun (Common Knowledge Bank)* platform in order to promote the exchange of local knowledge and experience other modes of citizen participation. The Neokinok TV collective brings art and education together in its projects, such as *TVLATA*, with the *Alagados* community in Salvador/Brazil. Artists Marta de Gonzalo and Publio Pérez Prieto problematise the relationship between art, education, cooperation, creativity and life in video installations, workshops, and publications. Similarly, the Hackitectura.net group works with temporary interdisciplinary laboratories that connect online network spaces and physical spaces. We can also mention the Megafone website, the Post Urbano collective and the Wokitoki collective. (Ohlenschläger, 2009). Such projects refer to collaborative online networking practices,

Given that technological systems are socially produced, and this social production is related to culture, our current digital age is increasingly defined by a renewed network of transdisciplinary interactions between arts and sciences, between technologies and their social uses (Ohlenschläger, 2009, p. 22, our translation).

Catalan artist Antoni Abad⁵ has been developing collaborative poetics on the internet, with the creation of digital narratives by participants, such as the **MOTOBOY Channel*. Through the mobile operating system, *Zexe.net*, it provides a collaborative space populated by diverse communities such as motorbike riders in São Paulo, taxi drivers in Mexico City, and people with reduced mobility in Barcelona, among others. In this proposal, “the artist does not intervene in the production of the images but only provides access to the tools and reticular architecture of communication to certain social groups” (Ohlenschläger, 2009, p. 27, our translation). For Abad, the artist’s role is: “on the one hand to divert this funding that was dedicated to art to this territory that I think is much more social, and on the other hand, my role in these projects is to be a facilitator” (Abad, 2007, p. 3, our translation).

⁵ <https://antoniabad.info/mix/46>

Abad renounces authorship of the work as a conception or object by situating himself as a facilitator. He rescinds from the artist the privileged position of representing a certain reality, of proposing a certain situation to be experienced, or of giving voice to minorities. His work is collectively realised through the appropriation of networked dispositifs by communities. His concern for the horizontal siting of the artist and community is present from the development of the dispositif to their use and appropriation.

In these projects, one thing is to get these collectives, which always appear in the media because of their negative image, to represent themselves, to be the ones to generate their news, to voice their concerns or their daily lives. Once you have managed to get these collectives to organise themselves and start talking, it is important to have a diffusion. (Abad, 2007, p. 2, our translation).

Abad, with his technological devices, creates a certain connectivity between the bodies that inhabit the same place, activating the power of affect. The affects move bodies in connectivity, the “affect can produce a sensory or abstract result and is physically and temporally produced. It is determined by change and organisation and consists of a variety of factors that include the geographical, biological, meteorological, astrophysical, and cultural” (Colman, 2005, p. 11). A body never moves alone and autonomous to its environment, it is always inserted in a network of connectivity, where “connectivity is, in the first place, relational and plural. It presupposes a sum of intermittent intertwined singularities, in movement and, therefore, united only temporarily”. (Ohlenschläger, 2009, p. 20, our translation). In the project **MOTOBOY Channel*, Abad promotes a temporary connectivity between participants in order to provide, via online technology, affective exchanges. “The effect of collaborative art practice is to frame this exchange (spatially, institutionally, procedurally), sufficiently distancing it from everyday social interaction to stimulate a degree of self-reflection; to draw attention to the exchange itself as creative praxis” (Kester, 2006, p. 31, our translation).

Abad provokes the production of a commons that is generated in the intervals of creative practice itself. They are singularities that manifest themselves to make the collective work exist, vulnerable discourses registered on the social platform and that oppose those of the mass media, discourses that inaugurate actions. As Judith Butler (2017) states, the ways of speaking and living are inseparable, the statements/discourses produce acts, behaviors, and conventions. The electronic platform Zexe.net functions as a communicational device that promotes the visibility of discourses and social agency.

4. The collective and the common

In this sense, practices in communities can intensify the power of affect and the action of bodies. We observe, from such practices, that we can only justify our existence in the presence of another body, as Spinoza and Judith Butler (in a different way) point out. According to Butler, for the other to emerge, we need to listen; and in order for us to listen, we cannot be the protagonists of speech all the time. The other is not something that is at one’s service or submissive and subjected to one’s utilitarian capitalistic needs. The other (not only humans) gives existence to the “I” in the sense of what it thinks it knows, and, above all, openness to the unconscious, unspeakable, unnarratable levels, enabling the subject of other forms of life (Butler, 2017).

To be undone by another is a primary necessity, an anguish, to be sure, but also a chance—to be addressed, claimed, bound to what is not me, but also to be moved, to be prompted to act, to address myself elsewhere, and so to vacate the self-sufficient “I” as a kind of possession. (Butler, 2017, p. 171, our translation).

The “I”, challenged and disorientated by another, is not always the same. For Butler (2017), we suspend a certain requirement to be identical at all times, we open possibilities to let the “I” and the other live in me, and we provoke a process of dispossession of any affirmative narrative of the “I”. We assume attitudes of respect, humility (self-acceptance) and generosity (acceptance of the other) in social relationships, since “I will have to be forgiven for what I cannot fully know and I will have a similar obligation to forgive others” (Butler, 2017, p. 61, our translation). We end with the pretence of the subject to be the founder of itself or to have a founding act of something, that is, “the subject cannot fully provide the grounds of its own emergence” (Butler, 2017, p. 150, our translation), in such a way, there is a collective subject that deconstructs any strict and isolated conception of self. A collective subject that is activated in collaborative practices.

In this sense, we first seek to problematise the idea of community. Just as there is no substantialised subject, there is also no substantialised community. We do not seek to define things, objects, communities, or works, but instead dwell on their relationships, tensions, established bonds, and emergences of a commons, given that.

There is another thread that links the common, not to the essence of human beings or the nature of things, but to an activity of the people themselves: only a practice that starts in common can decide if it is “common”, reserve certain things for common use, produce certain rules capable of engaging people (LavaL; Dardot, 2015, p. 9, our translation).

Collaborative artistic practices do not aim to equate self-sufficient individuals or communities with stigmatised manifestations. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2004) deconstruct the idea of a unitary society/community by way of the concept of multitude. For them, a multitude is composed of heterogeneous singularities that aim to create actions of production and political sharing in order to empower local communities. Negri states that the “multitude is the name of an immanence. The multitude is a set of singularities” (Negri, 2009, p. 15) so that “the production of subjectivity, the production that the subject makes of itself is,

simultaneously, the production of the consistency of the multitude – since the multitude is a set of singularities” (Negri, 2009, p. 19, emphasis by the author, our translation). By treating subjects as singularities, Negri avoids the notion of propertied individuals who perpetuate their fixed and possessive aspects. He proposes the notion of singularities that harbour incommensurable multiplicities and differences in relations of production, cooperation, and collaboration (Oliveira, 2017). A multitude of flesh that contains bodies and their powers to act (Negri, 2009).

In thinking of the *multitude as power*, Negri adopts Spinoza’s thought by enquiring into what a body can do, understanding the body and mind as inseparable. “The first constitutive matter of the multitude is the flesh, that is, the substance of common life in which body and mind coincide and are indistinguishable” (Negri, 2009, p. 19, our translation). Spinoza brings a philosophy of life in which everything takes place in existence, not as transcendence, but as immanence. A pragmatics of the body (and the soul) on the plane from which they emanate, a valorisation of experience that challenges the idealisation of life. Power is always what a body can do, always animated by affects that diminish or enhance it. Therefore, his philosophy is about an Ethics that aims to potentiate intensities through the singularities of living and not about a Morality that is tied to generalities and value judgments about the qualitative differences of existing beings (Oliveira, 2010).

We have seen that the flesh of the multitude produces in common in a way that is monstrous and always exceeds the measure of any traditional social bodies; but this productive flesh does not create chaos and social disorder. What it produces, in fact, is *common*, and the common we share serves as the basis for future production, in an spiral, expansive relationship. (Hardt; Negri, 2004, p. 196).

Actions and struggles driven by the commons actualize silenced controversies and project future structures, as Laval and Dardot (2015) indicate when exemplifying a certain community: “the objective of the struggle and the subjectivities of the mobilised individuals coherently functioned because the organisation of the struggle to recover that common resource already outlined what its future management should be”. (Laval; Dardot, 2015, p. 125, our translation). Each multitude brings out what is common to it, or rather, produces this common through artistic, political, and social actions. Collaborative artistic proposals act precisely in the production of the common of each community.

The common refers to what is neither in the public nor in the private domain but pertains to the dimension of what is common to many. It is not linked to party organisations or established institutions, and neither does it spontaneously self-organise, for it requires regular practices and organisational projects specific to each community. The commons requires the construction of ecosystemic practices that belong to a specific community (Oliveira, 2017), such as those established by socially engaged art. The production of the common emerges in the valorisation of the heterogeneity of elements, agents, discourses, desires, affects, and ideas that inhabit each community, and that can be activated within the engagement of collaborative artistic proposals.

The commons requires the construction of regulating practices in ecosystems that belong to each community. In this sense, we problematise the word common in the plural, since it refers more to material goods (water, fish, soil, etc.) as the common ownership of a community. Hardt and Negri’s (2004) investigations focus on the common in the singular, as immaterial holdings (ideas, codes, information, images, languages, personal relationships). They focus not on the objects, but on the modes of organisation or functioning, the *modus operandi* of the multitude, the collective decisions taken, the collective management, the self-management capacity of the communities, the labour relations, and the language. “Language is the main form of constitution of the common; and when living labour and language intersect and define themselves as an ontological machine, it is then that the founding experience of the common takes place” (Negri, 2009, p. 23, our translation). Concerning labour, they point out that work done individually, based on the common, needs to be shared collectively, and socially, in favour of a sharing of the common good.

From this perspective, we ask ourselves: what is the place of art in the construction of the common? What is the role of art in the sharing of the common, of knowledge, of social experiences? What is the position of contemporary art regarding the production of an aesthetic of plurality and not of universality? Establishing the common must be a political and social concern that can be addressed by the field of art. It is not a question of defending the common, but of promoting the common, of provoking actions in favour of the common: common as a power of the collective, or rather of collective bodies (Spinoza), human and non-human (animals, machines, microorganisms, etc.).

Such concepts propose a conception of community that is beyond an idea of human society that would harbour its individuals, a conception of the collective individual, in which individuals act as a function of society. There would be a subjection of the individual to society, society being a set of individuals, in a relationship between parts and whole, an identity unit that aims to preserve its previous substance. Differently from this conception, Simondon, Latour, Negri and Hardt provide an understanding of community in which there is no totalising prior substance or unitary identity; on the contrary, they conceive that individuals and community are constituted in the same reciprocal relational process, wherein they do not exist separately *a priori*, since their existence emerges from the relationship itself.

French philosopher Gilbert Simondon indicates that the social can only be comprehended from an ontogenesis of the social that does not dissociate individual and social, the psychic and the collective, the natural and cultural, subject and object, psychology and sociology, nor idealism and materialism. In his philosophical theory, Simondon conceives of Being in a non-substantial and non-hylomorphic way, but as an effect of the relations between individual and milieu, that is, Being is simultaneously individual and milieu within processes of individuation. “Being is relation, for relation is the inner resonance of being with relation

to itself, how it reciprocally conditions itself within itself” (Simondon, 1989, p. 210, our translation), in relation to its external milieu.

In this regard, the notion of individual and community or social can only be thought of as a trans-individual that belongs to a paradoxical paradigm that affirms difference and carries political implications.

To affirm that social change happens through this intimate-common plane of the subjects means expanding the notion of politics, including in it a pre-individual affective dimension, which is the dimension of the unsubstantialised collective, the collective present in each one of us: the transindividual collective (Escóssia, 2014, p. 108, our translation).

When Simondon alerts us that we need to return individuals to a pre-individual dimension, he beckons to a notion of politics that turns to activate the individual to their powers to act, that is, to motivate in communities the differences that contaminate each other, to affirm the existence of the act of sharing. Muriel Combes, in reference to Simondon, also points out that the community emerges from a pre-individual zone as a collective.

In emphasising that the collective, these approaches bring about a reciprocal process between the individual (artist) and the community (collective), through the sharing of knowledge, desires, habits, looks, gestures, and experiences that cross and flesh out the body, an aggregation with the collective, a collective agency to be activated and cartographed. We are not writing in terms of hierarchy and separation, but of empowerment through respect for difference and the power of the collective.

Unlike society, the collective is defined through its practices, more explicitly, through a learning trajectory. In other words, the constitution of a common world is a process of progressive composition, not in the sense of a modernist linear process, but of a process of connections, inclusions and exclusions that operate in existence itself. (Escóssia, 2014, p. 191, our translation).

Collective that is produced from processes of psychic and collective individuation that occurs from technological operations that take place at the energetic, pre-individual level, realised in micro-political actions. As previously stated, everything occurs in relationships, understood not as causes of symbolic chains exclusively, but as effects of the difference of energetic potentials that lie at the bottom of individuation processes and that connect individuals to the pre-individual plane.

5. Conclusions

In examining collaborative practices in contemporary art, we have explored proposals for socially engaged art that underscore the significance of affects in collaborative relationships and the importance of reevaluating our concepts of community and communal production within these frameworks. These socially engaged art practices, typically transdisciplinary and situated in non-institutional spaces, aim to activate local collective knowledge and practices. By recording and disseminating their processes, these projects facilitate the circulation of unique knowledge, the integration of unexpected locales, and the amplification of often unheard narratives embedded in everyday life.

Discussing the interplay between affects and collaborative actions, we highlight the intrinsic connection between the two. Affects involve physical interactions that arise during experiences and can enhance or detract from collaborative efforts. Essentially, collaborative practices cannot exist without the physical and emotional engagement of individuals, occurring through non-verbal complicity and empathy. Reflecting on affects allows us to appreciate that ideas are not solely products of rational thought but are also shaped by the sensory capabilities of the human body.

Such affective collaborative experiences are evident in socially engaged art initiatives, which demand the physical presence of individuals with their ideas and affects. These initiatives provide experiential situations and unresolved conditions that encourage new ways of collective feeling and thinking. We comprehend the significance of affects and art in their political and social dimensions through these engagements.

Our analysis of collaborative projects like *Affective DNA kamê and kanhru* and *MOTOBOY Channel* reveals that they challenge the traditional notion of the solitary artist-individual-researcher entering a well-defined community to uncover and preserve specific identities or memories. Instead, these projects embody reciprocal interactions between individuals (artists/researchers) and communities, sharing knowledge, desires, habits, outlooks, gestures, and experiences that collectively enrich and define both parties, as noted by Oliveira (2017).

In the *Affective DNA kamê and kanhru* project, several aspects of the collaborative process are noteworthy: the duration of community engagement, which began in 2016 and continues presently, fostering trust, partnership, and intimacy; attentive listening to community needs, ensuring that actions are meaningful to all stakeholders; and the creation of spaces for both recognizing individual community characteristics and cultivating communal elements. The resulting collaborative outputs – such as children’s drawings, bilingual digital games for teaching the *Kaingang* language, traditional game adaptations, booklets, video art, and documentaries – are not merely end products but integral parts of the ongoing artistic collaboration. These creations arise from shared encounters and experiences and open avenues for new affections, marking stages in a creative process that begins with the initial desire to come together.

In the *MOTOBOY Channel* initiative, we witness the formation of collective entities, which also act as catalysts for various community-driven endeavors, thereby activating the shared interests of the participants. The artist, Abad, plays a pivotal role by facilitating these gatherings and ensuring that the technical conditions are

optimal for the community to express their often overlooked, disregarded, or unknown perspectives through their own images and voices. This internal connectivity fosters emotional ties that strengthen their collaborative efforts, thereby forming what is recognized as a collective. Externally, this initiative demonstrates the collective's identity and its common outputs to the broader community. In the *MOTOBOY Channel* project, the process of creating a collective is clearly delineated, beginning with the identification of the elements that unite its members, to the public dissemination of these elements through the creation of a collective object—in this instance, a smartphone application that allows for the visualization of the collective's chosen representations.

Through these practices, we reconsider notions of the social, community, and collaboration, advancing the concept of the collective. This concept challenges the traditional view of an isolated, substantial 'I', suggesting instead that individuals are shaped through collective processes which, in turn, produce communal and transindividual elements. Simondon, Latour, Negri, and Hardt critically examine paradigms that portray individuals and society as unified, total, and distinct entities. These authors, along with those who advocate for collaborative practices, reject notions of fixed identities to instead emphasize the importance of sharing and activating collective power.

Thus, to scrutinize what defines collaborative practices in contemporary art and to distinguish these from identity-centric and divisive approaches, we embrace a nuanced stance that navigates the interplay between the collective and the singular, the global and the local, as well as the mental and physical aspects of creative activity. This approach is rooted in a diversity of expressions that aim to share a non-material common ground of knowledge, desires, dreams, feelings, and affects, while also producing social impacts through micro-political actions.

In socially engaged art practices, we observe artistic interventions that highlight the influence of affects in generating communal knowledge. These interventions prompt us to consider the nature of our relationships with others and how these interactions can either foster or inhibit a shared commonality. By acknowledging the role of affects and art within their political and social contexts, we engage with a discourse of difference that opens up alternative possibilities for communal life.

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