'Mobility is our goal!': challenging perceptions towards citizenship, migration and asylum seeking through performative interventions.

Anja Kanngieser

> We deconstruct the 'givenness' to show the cracks that sutures have patched, to demonstrate that what is taken as privileged discourse is merely a construction that conceals power and self-interest (Aronowitz, 1989: 55).

The year of 1997 saw the appearance of two concentric events in German radical artistic and activist milieus; the inaugural publication of the *Handbuch der Kommunikationsguerilla* (Handbook of Communications Guerrilla), and the genesis of the Kein Mensch ist Illegal (No one is Illegal) campaign. The *Handbuch der Kommunikationsguerilla* represented the first comprehensive guide to methods and histories of direct action and political intervention utilising aesthetic and creative techniques. It drew out a tactical paradigm from the Dadaists through the Situationists, Kommune 1 and Gruppe Spur to the Yippies, the Neoists and various European and American squatters, pranksters and libertines continuing the legacy of subversion well into the 1990s. The Kein Mensch ist Illegal campaign (which was initiated in the Hybrid Workspace at the *Documenta X* in Kassel) was inspired by the velocity of the French 'Sans Papiers' movement and signalled the inception of one of the most sustained networks of autonomous resistance to German and European anti-migration politics.

I prologue this essay with Aronowitz's maxim, parallel to these two contemporaneous events, as they articulate a specific moment of convergence between political and aesthetic conceptualisation and praxis in the German radical left. While in themselves both events may be considered innocuous, together they demonstrated the emergence of a new vernacular around cultural, social, and artistic practices concerned with human mobility and migration. Subsequent to the dismantling of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of Soviet communism, the German socio-political temperament began to illustrate the changes that were to become

harbingers in the attitude of the state. Two arenas in which these changes were evinced were in the government's draconian responses to asylum seeking and refugees, and in the crisis of the popular and radical political left. The unprecedented influx of reuniting 'foreigner' families, returning ethnic Germans and Jewish people from Eastern Europe, settlers from the GDR and asylum seekers from civil wars was instrumentalised as justification for public and parliamentary controversy and xenophobia (Marshall, 2000: 1). This influx of migration coincided with a dramatic escalation of anti-foreigner sentiment further agitated by media rhetoric with the result that between 1990 and 1992, attacks on foreigners had increased by 800 percent (Human Rights Watch, 1995). Consequentially state apparatuses set in motion further strategies for ceasing the potential for cross border mobility. With the fall of the wall came substantial increases in asylum applications, with received applications almost doubling in 1992. The majority of these were either rejected or lost within bureaucratic processes, and in order to combat the increase in asylum applications and racist violence, severe restrictions were passed on the Basic Asylum Law to limit the right of asylum (initial propositions of which included the abolishment of constitutional rights to asylum). [4] Under such oppressive measures, 'illegal' immigration became pervasive with estimates of up to 1.5 million undocumented migrants living in Germany (No One is Illegal, 2000).

Struggling to recompose politics beyond the spectre of prior Marxist ideological hegemonies, in conjunction with the pressures of response to social upheavals such as those around asylum seeking and racist nationalism, the momentum of the post-unification radical left was temporarily eroded. 1997, however, witnessed the commencement of networks (such as Kein Mensch ist Illegal) targeting and deconstructing the aftermath of the consequent shifts in German public perception to the migration phenomenon. These networks posed a challenge to reformist, representative and hierarchical models of political organisation which had been symptomatic of migration-oriented initiatives. Furthermore, the particular manifestation launched by Kein Mensch ist Illegal was informed by a praxis form that had, to that point, remained peripheral in German activist subcultures; that of the creative and performative intervention. This performative intervention was

consolidated through what has been referred to as methods of communications guerrilla, or 'political praxis forms […] that traverse the old boundaries between political action and the everyday world, subjective anger and rational political action, art and politics, desire and work, theory and praxis' (Autonome A.F.R.I.K.A Gruppe, 2002). These transversal forms, principles and methods of communications guerrilla are designed to concretely intervene in processes of communication and reception of media narratives. More specifically, in the instances this essay examines, these interventions acted to interrupt racist media narratives via tactics such as faking and semiotic subversion. Correlatively, such modes of performative intervention also recall what political and cultural theorist Stephen Duncombe (2007) has recently referred to as an 'ethical spectacle'. For Duncombe the ethical spectacle is an experimental means of creating diffuse visibility, open exchange and innovation around social and political issues neglected or mis-represented by the mass media.

Two initiatives that have developed in concomitance to the networks of Kein Mensch ist Illegal – the Bundesverband Schleppen und Schleusen (Schleuser.net) and the Transnational Republic – have appropriated this style of performative intervention as one of their central dialogical apparatuses, albeit in different forms: as a lobby organisation and as a micronation respectively. [1] Responding to policy shifts around human mobility and border politics, both collectives have utilised performative and creative mechanisms as a 'dispositif' through which to open public exchange around state exclusion of non citizen-subjects, asylum seekers and undocumented migrants. [2] In this essay I will examine how these two collectives have used such performative interventions to draw attention to, disassemble, and reconfigure new possibilities for approaching the inherently racist politics marking the migrant and refugee debates in the European Union. I propose that the methodology used by these groups signals an interesting and highly participatory way to both disrupt and re-territorialise informational processes around issues of human movement. By adopting such a methodology, these initiatives act as a platform for exposing the rhetorics of fear and exclusion underlying dominant media apparatuses, through interactive platforms which encourage participants to critically, and actively, self-analyse these narratives.

Constructing transversals through the aesthetic and the political

The interventions composed by affiliates of the Kein Mensch ist Illegal network to critically challenge migration related discourses – such as those of Schleuser.net and the Transnational Republic – reflect a particular performative element axial to acts of communications guerrilla, namely transversality. While politically and socially oriented performance interventions have amassed a significant heritage over the past century (as represented by the *Handbuch der Kommunikationsguerilla*), these have often been framed within classificatory paradigms; street theatre, avant-garde art, intervention art, political theatre etc, that have allowed them to be easily documented and recognised. Despite clearly sharing a certain genealogical resemblance to these forms, the sorts of practices I am referring to, with regards to Schlueser.net and the Transnational Republic, have been notoriously difficult to define. The Critical Art Ensemble, who assign this problem to a particular kind of cultural practice that the two aforementioned collectives typify, has made this crisis of definition most explicit. As they write:

> Its roots are in the modern avant-garde, to the extent that participants place a high value on experimentation and on engaging the unbreakable link between representation and politics. Perhaps this is a clue as to why this practice has remained unnamed for so long. Since the avant-garde was declared dead, its progeny must be dead too. Perhaps this brood is simply unrecognizable because so many of the avant-garde's methods and narratives have been reconstructed and reconfigured to such an extent that any family resemblance has disappeared along with its public face. To intensify matters, participants are neither fish nor fowl. They aren't artists in any traditional sense and don't want to be caught in the web of metaphysical, historical, and romantic signage that accompanies that designation. Nor are they political activists in any traditional sense, because they refuse to solely take the reactive position of anti-logos, and are just as willing to flow through fields of nomos in defiance of efficiency and necessity. In either case, such role designations are too restrictive in that

the role boundaries exclude access to social and knowledge systems that are the materials for their work. Here may be a final link to invisibility: these participants value access over expertise, and who really cares about the work of an amateur? (2001: 3-4)

What resonates in this reflection is a particular ubiquitous characteristic, an ambiguity and multiplicity of identity associated with the continual interruption and re-composition of identity, that is never reducible to components but always assembling (Deleuze, 1995: 44). 'Neither fish nor fowl', not artist or activist but artist and activist: some third (or fourth or fifth) subjectivity crossing through and transforming their categorical concatenation. This accumulative and mobile element is bound up in such practices with what Felix Guattari (1984) and Gerald Raunig (2007) ascribe to the 'transversal'; particular modes which de-territorialise and reconfigure the planes, groups, disciplines and institutions they move across, in this case those 'new terrains of open co-operation between different activist, artistic, social and political practices' (Kelly, 2005). Such conceptualisations of transversality have been instrumental in opening up new vocabularies for understanding creativity and agency, especially in terms of radical subjectivities that participate in multiple categories of identification. Qualities of these subjectivities such as their high adaptability to contingency and mutability, inherently imbue them with subversive possibility. At the same time however, as they cannot be easily defined, they risk the chance of falling into invisibility. However, it is this ambiguity that allows them the capacity to 'push against and even re-organise the institutional and political structures of artistic recognition and production' (ibid).

Such transversal elements pertain not only to discussions around the artistic milieu but also to the reconfiguration of the left after the collapse of Soviet communism which forced widespread reassessments of political organisation and action. Guattari's involvement in political activity and organisational models helped him to apply his theory of the transversal to the proposals on the emancipation of the individual and group from hierarchical operations of domination and power (1984: 24-44). Conceptualisations such as Guattari's provided theoretical tools to the

successors of post-Autonomia Marxism and variations of anarchism, aspects of which became highly influential on the transfigurations of the German (and global) left; such as non-hierarchical, collectivised organising models, increased heterogeneity and trans-group collaborations, international and accentuated global and local networks and communications, and perhaps most notably, a post-representational ethic (Graeber 2002). What Guattari's theorisations additionally contributed to such experimental political praxes was to articulate the capacity for creativity in radical action. [3] For Guattari, art had to be understood not as 'just the activity of established artists but of a whole subjective creativity which traverses the generations and oppressed peoples, ghettoes, minorities', following from which 'the aesthetic paradigm – the creation and composition of mutant percepts and affects – has become the paradigm for every possible form of liberation' by nature of its affirmation of radical political subjectivities (1995: 91). This convocation by Guattari between the aesthetic, the ethical and the political in light of the reinvention of the left helps to make explicable precisely the nexus of revolutionary possibility traversed by initiatives such as Schleuser.net and the Transnational Republic, whose quite different modes of performative platform function as both aesthetic and socio-political devices, which redefine the structures of both artistic and political work.

Illustrating transversal activisms: Schleuser.net as lobby organisation and the Transnational Republic as micronation

Schleuser.net was founded in 1998 by three activists and artists (also collaborators involved with Kein Mensch ist Illegal) as a lobby organisation whose objective is the intervention in semiotic and ideological reproductions of discrimination against human smugglers and traffickers. Responding to new policies converting the legal and social status of those enabling undocumented border crossing from *fluchthilfe* (escape aid) to *schleppen und schleusen* (smuggling and trafficking), the intent of the organisation is to present 'the public with systematic background information regarding migrant mobility, and to work on improving the image of the so called 'smugglers and traffickers' (Heuck et al 2005: 64). As a liaison body, the group fulfills the labor of a lobby organisation by connecting with those involved in transportation

activities, conducting information sharing and education sessions, and 'representing […] members before state institutions and the media' in order to 'promote the rectification of state-sponsored public relations' (ibid).

Axial to the function of a registered lobby organisation is the appeal to legislative and governmental bodies to implement juridical change. Comparatively, the task of Schleuser.net is not to directly appeal to state authority bodies but to (re)present those implicated in the criminalisation of movement in communication and media processes. Prior to the implementation of the Budapest Trial in 1993, and crucially shaped by the events of the Second World War and Cold War, the concept of aiding flight through borders was deeply imbued with visions of the covert humanitarian ferrying refugees across the border from danger into safety. This understanding of 'escape aid' was ratified in 1977 in a federal court decision which accepted it and its payment as legitimate, declaring any person helping a refugee fulfil their right to Freedom of Movement as legally able to claim approved and moral motivations for the action (Homann, 2006). With tensions already accelerating, the legal re-definition of escape aid into organised crime through the Budapest documents further fuelled conservativist media campaigns around border security. Using the principles of communications guerrilla not to 'destroy the dominant channels of communication, but to detourn and subvert the messages transported' (Blissett and Brünzels, 1998), Schleuser.net launched themselves as participants in the extra-national 'travel market'. Their aim was to 'represent the interests of companies […] engaged in the market segment of undocumented border transgression and passenger transportation' (Heuck et al, 2005: 64). Because 'the immigration of people who have been declared economically useful is supported [and] the immigration of allegedly useless people is prevented, or, because it isn't to be prevented, made illegal' (Schleuser.net 'association profile'), the instigators perceived deficits in the mobility sector that they could performatively address. As they explain:

> Schleuser.net works for the peculiarities and needs of the undocumented travel market to be, free of any value, realized by a greater part of the public. The ideological justification of increased border security, and the

administrative obstacles to free movement are, in our eyes, devoid of any good reasons based on facts; and, in normalizing the present conditions, they give way to a wide array of bad feelings. Reinforcing the outer borders of the EU, and over-regulating the cross border rail, road and sea traffic, creates a hard to estimate danger for travellers to be physically harmed (ibid).

This exposure of the hazards enforced by state intervention upon clandestine travel from the political subject-position of the migrant, and the ensuing dangers of counter-active methods to circumvent these, prompted the establishment of an ongoing *Seal of Approval 'White Sheep'* to be granted to individual taxi drivers and other transporters. Replicating the 'quality control' of travel agencies, this seal of approval acts to confer the 'standard of service' on different smuggling operations. 'White sheep' are differentiated from those involved in profiteering rackets or that engage in headhunting activities, for instance, deliberately transporting migrants for the purposes of labour exploitation (ibid 'service').

The launch of the initiative as an entrepreneurial organisation (advertising 'future-oriented conditions for a responsible globalization') coincided with a series of events entitled *Escape Aid: New Light on an Old Profession!* hosted by the collective, which included the *International Smugglers Conference* in Austria during November 2003. This comprised cross-disciplinary and public think-tank debates around possible strategic and tactical movements vis-à-vis state controlled image management. While many of the key invited participants were practicing artists, activists and scientists involved in satellite migration oriented projects, the public interface of the event was typical of the collective's desire to extend dialogue beyond specialised circles. Demonstrating the inner workings of the project as a lobby organisation in its day to day permutations, a temporary office was set up from July until August 2002 as a public and private point of contact in the Kunstverein Munchen, a gallery space in the Munich Hofgarten in the vicinity of governmental buildings and other lobby organisation headquarters. The *Open House* day held on 10th August 2002 featured conversations with lobbyists and activists around anti-deportation and detention campaigns, facts stands with magazines and other visual materials documenting

statistics around refugees and undocumented migrants in various German territories, current publications, as well as general question/answer and debate sessions. To further create an ambiance conducive to the feel of a community event, hot dogs and refreshments were provided as were pennants, buttons and a free give-away.

Hot dogs, pennants and talks on human trafficking: it is precisely this ambiguity predicated upon a transversal between aesthetic project, autonomous organisation, and socio-political campaign that makes initiatives such as Schleuser.net interesting to theorisations on aesthetic and creative responses to discourses of fear and terror around migration. The performative platform of the lobby organisation and the appropriation of its recognised organisational signifiers allows a particular legitimacy that is not necessarily associated with artistic projects *per se*. This is in part due to its sustained nature, but more so due to its ongoing commitment as a genuinely public interface. While exhibitions and the creation of plastic works compose an element of this communicational activity, the interventions are not dependent on these as such. The interactive quality of the initiatives, already embedded in the performative formats chosen by the initiators provides a means through which to personally engage with those present, drawing them into the event which is simultaneously reliant on their participation for its operation. Unlike the avant-garde event, the event of Schleuser.net does not exist prior to this participation; it does not rely on the effects of spectacular value or provocation for its ontological fulfilment but on the coalescions of temporary communities built on feedback loops between its participants.

The Transnational Republic project operates in much the same way, with regards to this interactive principal. Synchronous to Schleuser.net, the Transnational Republic conducts information sharing and education sessions, but with a focus on issues of democracy, citizenship and the state. The project was formed in 1996 in Munich but officially emerged in 2001, with a core group of around four collaborators (Rist and Zoche, 2006). Under the motto 'globalization needs democracy', the collective takes as its foundation for analysis the accelerating proliferation of globally acting

corporations, and their effects on the functioning and power of nation-states. This foundation prompts questions such as:

> who then is still defending our global civil rights? Can nation-states act transnationally, or do they merely block one another? Is the traditional idea of the separation of powers rendered obsolete? Shouldn't we take money (and the media) into consideration as the 'fourth power'? Does the geopolitical division of people into nation-states reflect the spirit of modern times? Could we learn from Coca-Cola, Shell and Microsoft how interests can be realised at a global level? (Transnational Republic 'Information')

As a means by which to critically respond to such questions, the collective adopted the autonomous micronation as a performative gesture of exodus. The Transnational Republic micronation – the 'First Transnational Republic' – fundamentally differs from the conventional nation-state in that citizenship or participation is predicated on ideologically and affectively connected communities as opposed to the laws of *jus soli* (right of soil) or *jus sanguinis* (right of blood). On involvement with the project, citizen rights include 'human rights, transnational principles of justice, the protection of our environment as well as the democratic rights of the individual' (ibid 'Manifesto'). Besides this difference in the constitution of citizenship, and that the Transnational Republic micronation is not officially recognised (and thus has no legal, economic, geographical or political power as such) the project has proceeded along the lines of an alternative nation-state replete with passports, a system of currency, a national anthem, flag and public identity.

The micronation as a performative platform is one that is wholly contingent upon durational participation and the assemblage of 'temporary space-time commons'. [5] In this way its proclivities resemble those of a political group than an aesthetic project in the conventional sense. Because of its status as a molecular exodus, the micronation as a performative platform displays an ambivalent relationship to the artistic institution. Like the lobby organisation of Schleuser.net, integral to its manoeuvring around this context is its ability to identify outside of it. Without this

ability its political message would be negated in these instances. This is how the project can be simultaneously relevant to events such as the *Art and Alternative Politics Utopia Station* at the Venice Biennale (2003), the *European Social Forum* (2004), the *UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)* conference (2006).

Contravening the typical disposition of a state-critical artistic or semiotic economy in which what is made visible proclaims its visibility without gesturing toward (non-prescriptive) further action, the collective assembled the Transnational Republic as a vehicle for *intervention*. The performative micronation acts as a platform for state criticism that also includes the composition of a communal space for the self-determined constitution of power. Responding to the increased permeability of European and German borders for sanctioned goods, information services and citizens, and excessive impenetrability for 'illegitimate' travellers and asylum seekers (see Balibar and Mezzadra 2006), the micronation acts as a location in which questions of exclusion and inclusion no longer hinge upon governmental authority. This is because the micronation constructs itself as an autonomous self-determined arena. The micronation, through its ontological character as an ambivalent site both reproductive of, and autonomous from the state, imbues all of its permutations (and its participants) with a radical politics. More so even for the Transnational Republic who use the micronation as a mode capable of evoking critical new agencies within the *present* rather then within some alternative future destination.

For the Transnational Republic this site is used to deconstruct and interrogate the mechanisms of the contemporary nation-state with regards to human mobility and representation. They argue that the conventional nation-state is no longer best equipped to act as the representative of democracy in the face of rising transnationalism, the velocity of transnational corporations in the determination of global and national standards of living and labour production, and the contradictory movements of state and global power. They propose that what is needed is a wholly transnational body acting as (re)presentative of global citizenry. In this way:

national matters will still be dealt with within the various nation states and international matters within the United Nations, while transnational matters then fall into the responsibility of the UTNR (United Transnational Republic) (Transnational Republic 'globalisation needs democracy').

Replicating the mobility of transnational corporations largely unimpeded by national borders, the Transnational Republic understand their project as a means by which to address this problem of the *global* (re)presentation of the individual. As there has been no comparable method of citizen (re)presentation established in the political terrain the project sees its position as moving toward reconciling this lacuna. While 'the countries of this world cannot – under the influence of these transnational organisations – represent the interest of their citizens' (ibid), the Transnational Republic, as an autonomous project, has no affiliation toward such organisations. This autonomy from state and global economic bodies is further ameliorated through a concern with a right to self-determination over the accumulation of capital. Informed by the principle 'all power originates in the individual and is not alienable' what is crucial for the Transnational Republic is the organisation of self-governance, in which each individual has the ability to choose how they will participate and be (re)presented (Rist and Zoche, 2006). This is conceived as operating through the establishment of various micronations collected under a federative system, vying for citizens affiliated with their specific socio-political standpoint.

Similar to Schleuser.net these intentions of the Transnational Republic, while integrally supported and sustained after the event by static aesthetic and documentary media, are largely played out through performative sessions of information exchange, which reflect upon local and global economies, democracies and state conditions. These sessions commonly consist of spaces in which members of the collective are available to speak to the public about the project, lectures and discussion forums, documentary exhibitions and passport stations where participants can register for immediate citizenship. The public is encouraged to purchase goods available at such sessions with the Transnational Republic currency, the payola. In this way these sessions may be seen to preliminarily enact imaginings of the

micronation itself.

Composing the performative intervention through tactics of communications guerrilla

These devices used by the Transnational Republic to assemble the performative intervention; the passports, the payola, the flag, national anthem and even the micronation itself, anticipate praxis forms characteristic of communications guerrilla. In the projects of Schleuser.net and the Transnational Republic, tactics of communications guerrilla have been unequivocal. This is because of their explicit objective as a means by which to intervene in communicational processes of media reception and representation. This objective takes as given (more so as a requirement of their function-ability) the multiplicitous and heterogeneous nature of receiver potential, understanding the omni-vocality and directionality of communicational channels whilst synchronously recognising the coercive force of dominant media narratives.

In 1967 Umberto Eco famously argued the tactical necessity for guerrilla manoeuvres to expose the artificial nature of signifying systems in mass media and demonstrate the determination of the receiver in interpretation. Drawing inspiration from this argument, the Autonome A.F.R.I.K.A Gruppe introduced the neologism 'communications guerrilla' to strategically describe the myriad of 'principles, methods, techniques and practices, groups and actions, which intervene in social processes of communication' (Autonome A.F.R.I.K.A Gruppe, 1997: 6). For the group these strategies are played out through diverse tactics which have been informed by an avant-gardist legacy spanning the 20th century such as corporate faking, image distortion, usage of multiple names (neoism), adbusting, parody, subversive affirmation, pranks and performance interventions (ibid: 6). With the intention of appropriating the 'paradoxes and absurdities of power' as the fulcrum for political and social intervention, a translation of critical commentary into communicational intervention is developed 'by playing with representations and identities, with alienation and over-identification' (Autonome A.F.R.I.K.A Gruppe, 2002).

The significance of communications guerrilla tactics to these initiatives is hardly opaque. Two imbricating tactics of 'detournement' have been exceptional in the unfolding of the performative intervention in these instances: faking and semiotic subversion. [6] Following the influence of recent media and semiotic theory such as that of Schönberger (2006), we can propose that official codes and signs such as those that have been contorted in these performative projects, rely on contradictory forces oscillating between the constructed and performative nature of the sign and the ability of the sign to sustain its representative claim in the Socius. More specifically, this oscillation is tempered by the extent to which the aggregation of signifiers are singularly and collectively invested with authority and legitimated through their reproduction and institutionalisation. The more authority, reproducibility or recognisability the sign (or parts thereof) is imbued with, the more indexical significance it maintains in the instance of official iconography. This is precisely why official indexical systems or organisational formats are a fortuitous platform for appropriative trickery. Rather than directly opposing the general meaning assigned to the signifying organisational model, the model is hijacked with all of its trajectories, which are simultaneously assembled into new, and often contrary associations. For instance, the lobby organisation that does not solicit policy makers, or the nation-state that does not appeal to state bureaucracy. This movement however is subtle, and often ambiguous:

> A good fake owes its effect to the interaction of imitation, invention, distortion and exaggeration of existing linguistic forms. It mimics as perfectly as possible the voice of power in order to speak in its name and with its authority as undiscovered as possible for a limited period of time (Autonome A.F.R.I.K.A Gruppe, 1997: 65)

The lobby organisation of Schleuser.net and the micronation of Transnational Republic both affirm and resist this understanding of the fake, for while they are not officially recognised as such at all times, they nonetheless carry out the labour of those forms they aesthetically reproduce. This may lead to a highly idiosyncratic

predicament, for while they go unrecognised by state apparatuses, they have the capacity to be *mis*-recognised dependent on the milieu or reception of their presentation. This was certainly the case for the Transnational Republic in 2004 when they were invited to host a stall at the European Social Forum in London under the assumption that they were an official NGO linked to the United Nations body rather then an aesthetic project (Rist and Zoche, 2006). More ethically problematic, this equivocation has lead to situations that have unintentionally had duplicitous connotations and thus highly negative resonances. Over the course of the Transnational Republic project, migrants from Nigeria and Morocco, aspiring toward less precarious living and working conditions, repeatedly applied to be citizens under the belief that participation in the project would facilitate official European visas. In these instances the project has been misunderstood as embodying an actual geographical terrain, the inconclusiveness of the term 'Republic' being literally equated with 'territory' (Rist, 2007).

What is clear from these two examples is that the temporary space-time commons created through the events of these performative interventions are received as no less 'real' organisational spaces despite their irrelevance to state officiation. The mimicry engaged in by these interventions reveals itself as self-conscious and transparent, but it is also not a pure mimesis or impersonation. The spaces opened through such encounters are spaces that intervene in the flow of information, to shift it through interrogation, but to shift it into active re-territorialisation as another entity. The constitution of the lobby organisation and the micronation undertake the (re)construction of those codes, through using them as a platform for dialogue and critical analysis. Like Eco's active receiver, this illustrates the plenitude and diffusion of messages constitutive of the icon, which can morph, parallax-like, depending on the information made dominant: in the case of both Schleuser.net and the Transnational Republic, information around marginalised experiences of migration and mobility that juxtapose and reveal dominant xenophobic currents in mass media representation.

The semiotic image itself that is subverted in the fakery, much like the organisational format, takes on different properties through its conversion. The image is a compelling medium for subversion, as Bifo Berardi observes:

> what is interesting is not the Image as a representation of reality, but its dynamic power, its ability to stir up and build projections, interactions and narrative frames structuring reality. What is interesting in the Image is its ability to select among infinite possible perceptual experiences, so that the imagination becomes imagin/action (2005: 64).

Berardi's comment articulates the operation that is enacted by the semiotic deviance of Schleuser.net and the Transnational Republic. For both collectives the images or icons they appropriate are not intended to represent a replacement reality, but behave as active propositions of alternate imaginative states replete with more transversal flows of power that deviate from those associated with hierarchical organisations of force. Through their subversion this hierarchical authority is de-legitimised through the exposure of its fallibilities. This movement imbues the subversion itself with a power that is vastly different from its previous incarnation as it does attempt to reproduce a singular meaning. As the meaning created by the appropriated signs do not claim a sovereign truth or authority but rather stand as deconstructive of the organisations/ signs, they impress no forceful truth claim. Through this they jettison the singularity of the narrative purported by the state rather then reiterating its operation.

To clarify by way of example the insignia of the Transnational Republic is a direct copy of the United Nations logo. This entity draws authority from its replication of the United Nations logo and that which it signifies, however, its behaviour is inconsistent enough to demarcate its distance from its negative or hypocritical tendencies and interests (as perceived by the project initiators). So what results is the manipulation of the positive associations with the United Nations body, reframed in a more radically democratic forum, with the negative connotations accounted for through the difference of the project's political objective. This result does not reveal itself at first

glance but comes from a process of interaction, which is facilitated by the performative encounter.

Insignia of the United Transnational Republics. Reproduced with permission.

Where slippage occurs it is around a self-reflexivity within the form itself. This is not to insinuate negligence on the behalf of the collectives but to indicate a certain illusionary tendency embedded in these kinds of performative interventions that rely on faking and semiotic deviance. Previously I made mention of a situation that arose for the Transnational Republic regarding the misapprehension of the project as an actual, legal territory by Nigerian and Moroccan migrants. It is this ambiguity, an ambiguity essential to the performative intervention, as to communications guerrilla, that also poses questions on how we might ethically substantiate these encounters. In order for the performative intervention to function it must be believable, it must actively create transitory imaginary worlds, not simply allude to them. It must be able to involve people in this creative process, and it must operate as a political alternative, regardless of durationality or state legitimation. But for this to happen it cannot simply understand itself as an aesthetic project with some vague investment

in political struggle. Imperative to a commitment to state and capitalist critique is the construction, dissemination and communication of marginal narratives. The platform through which these are produced, as noted by the Autonome A.F.R.I.K.A Gruppe 'mimics as perfectly as possible the voice of power in order to speak in its name and with its authority' (1997: 65). While it might be argued that this pushes the intervention into categorical deception, I would contest that this cannot be understood in any dialectical sense; the confusion caused by mimicry and subversion of organisational and semiotic forms is vital to the success of the form itself. To counter-act media discrimination through communications guerrilla a legitimacy must be attached to the site of dissemination of information. For the Transnational Republic to be invited to speak at the UNESCO or European Social Forums, they must be able to claim relevance beyond the walls of the gallery as a social and political body.

At the same time however, to simply assert that this ambiguity is ethically problematic is also to neglect the obviously creative nature of these initiatives. While the fake might appear to be disingenuous, on contact with the event it becomes clear that this semiotic replication is superficial. Furthermore it is through this replication that the performative intervention *intervenes*. What the fake does is to provide a means by which to performatively critique state apparatuses, and more so a means by which to invite conversation and dialogue. As a tactic of disruption it helps to instantiate a point of contact into the event, an opening through which a temporary space-time commons emerges as a precondition for intensified reciprocity, participation and exchange.

Refusing specialisation: building participatory events through the performative intervention and the 'ethical spectacle'

The principle of open participation is inscribed not only in the performative intervention but also into the conceptualisation of communications guerrilla as tactic itself. For the Autonome A.F.R.I.K.A Gruppe communications guerrilla composes forms that attempt to avoid the specialisation, and consequentially isolation and

stagnation, associated with sub-cultural phenomena. It is important to remember here that this idea of communications guerrilla was formulated in a context struggling under the exhaustion of the post-Soviet radical left and the racism embodied in German nationalism, as a mobile means by which to chart a line of flight from the activist and artistic ghettos and forge correspondences to everyday situations. It is hardly surprising then, that such tactics were picked up by campaigners working in the virtual and actual fields surrounding migration and border crossing.

The precarious and ambiguous character of both the performative intervention and the communications guerrilla cooperate to create space for new emergences of temporary space-time commons around issues of human mobility. These communities require this amorphous arena in which to flourish as participatory. If, as with both Schleuser.net and the Transnational Republic, the performative intervention is predominantly, if not wholly, dependent on public participation for exchange, then any closure of the intervention through delimiting too strictly the terms of its enunciation also closes off possibility for interaction. Hence its ability to transverse contexts beyond the gallery, into social and political activisms. Unlike an official organisation both initiatives are inclusive of all participation, roles are not strictly segmented, and beside logistical distinctions between organisers and attendees, there is little in terms of hierarchy of knowledge. All aspects of the information presented are immediately made vulnerable to contention through dialogue. Because what is occurring is a direct breach of dominant informational flows, what is made primary is the agencies of both the initiators and the participants as active receivers and interpreters of media messages. The conceptualisation of the attendees (individually and collectively) as active receiver, sender and crucial participant, while an idea not especially new to aesthetic theory, can be seen as a means by which to address the tensions associated with both artistic and political tendencies toward sub-culturalism. [7] By interrogating xenophobic and exclusionary media narratives, the performative intervention performs a de-territorialising function; by offering an imaginative alternative a space is freed for creative constitution. The fledgling and unofficial nature of this reconstruction means that the participant doesn't need to be a specialist to be involved in its assemblage. The lack of

specialisation required helps to ameliorate and reconfigure relationships between the initiator and the participant, the 'artist' and her audience, or the 'activist' and the 'non-activist'. More importantly these categories of identification are rendered transversable through the option for active participation.

Writing in the late 1990s around the time of the emergence of networked global and transnational activist and protest movements such as those that eventually assembled under Kein Mensch ist Illegal, and those typical of Summit protests (anti-WTO/ G8/ G20/ WEF), the Autonome A.F.R.I.K.A Gruppe comment that this flight from, and identification within, sub-cultural realms is one upon which the future of such activism depends. As they argue 'the most important border that has to be crossed is the border that constitutes the activist her or himself in a separation from the 'rest' of society. We think that the praxis of the communication guerilla can contribute to this kind of border-crossing' (2000). This argument is exceptional for two reasons; firstly it underpins the desire of collectives such as these to engage in non-hierarchical *reciprocal* exchange and dialogue with the attendees and participants of their performances through performative interventions, rather then construct a unidirectional provocation to thought (as was the paradigm of the avant-garde such as the Dadaists and the Surrealists for instance) (Foster, 1988: 3-11). Secondly, the emphasis on communications guerrilla as part of a wider dispositif comprising the performative intervention, as a means by which to facilitate this relationship bares resemblance to the sorts of actions described by Stephen Duncombe (1997) as reflecting elements of an 'ethical spectacle', which is a form of encounter genealogically succeeding what the Situationist International described in 1958 as the 'constructed situation'. [8] For Duncombe this ethical spectacle should be understood as a tactical imperative for those involved in progressive politics in the current epoch. This is because he isolates in contemporary neoliberal political culture certain vicissitudes towards affective or emotive, even imaginative, discursive mechanisms. Duncombe argues that the ongoing transformation of the conservative right platform into a generator of the fictive can only be directly countered by the left through the adoption of affective spectacles. Distancing his position from the historical associations of fascism, and more recent associations of commercialism,

with spectacular events, Duncombe proposes that at least three ineluctable differences can be discerned between these and the ethical or progressive spectacle. These orbit around the audience (fascist or commercial: passive, ethical or progressive: active), around claims to objectivity and/ or truth (fascist or commercial: claim truth, ethical or progressive: expose falsity), around artificial and constructed nature of the event (fascist or commercial: opaque, ethical or progressive: transparent). As Duncombe concludes:

> as opposed to the spectacles of commercialism and fascism […] our spectacles will be participatory: dreams the public can mold and shape themselves. They will be active: spectacles that work only if people help create them. They will be open-ended: setting stages to ask questions and leaving silences to formulate answers. And they will be transparent: dreams that one knows are dreams but which still have the power to attract and inspire. And finally, the spectacles we create will not cover over or replace reality and truth but perform and amplify it. Illusion may be a necessary part of political life, but delusion need not be (2007: 4).

Where this tactical communications guerrilla and this strategic ethical spectacle come together is on this participatory, open, aesthetic or creative, and highly performative political agenda. Furthermore both these forms, of which the performative intervention can be considered an essential dispositif, present a critical deconstructive function – self and outwardly directed. This is consolidated through the dismantling of the indexical semantic procedures and executions of power. Schleuser.net and the Transnational Republic draw upon precisely these elements in their interrogations of the mechanisms of the state in relationship to anti-migrant discourses and policies. In this way, what is created is indeed an event reminiscent of Duncombe's 'ethical spectacle', composed through various tactics of communications guerrilla that fundamentally work to deconstruct and reconfigure media messages.

Writing about the media and its provocative role in the transmission of discourses, Garcia and Lovink comment that:

> to believe that issues of representation are now irrelevant is to believe that the very real life chances of groups and individuals are not still crucially affected by the available images circulating in any given society (Garcia and Lovink, 1997).

If we understand communications guerrilla as a means by which to intervene in these representations through tactics such as faking and semiotic subversion, then we can consider how such tactics have been appropriated by collectives centralised around questions of state exclusion, racism and migration such as the Transnational Republic and Schleuser.net. These tactics have been key to the assemblage of performative interventions which, much like Duncombe's ethical spectacle, have been predicated on a method dedicated to the composition of temporary space-time commons through dialogue, participation and exchange. Working with Eco's idea of the active receiver, the performative encounter as dispositif of communications guerrilla can be seen here as an interactive means by which to challenge discriminatory and racist conservative media propaganda.

Crucial to the adoption of this means is the profound shift it has signalled away from classical 'leftist' representative political practises. Rather then confronting participants with ideological imperatives opposed to those of dominant discourses, counter-narratives have been constructed in such a way that participants themselves are active in the process of their unfolding. Jettisoned are the social conscience lectures in which the 'audience' is expected to passively listen to the revolutionary words of the political or aesthetic specialist, in favour of experimental creative gestures, conversations, fake passports and give-aways.

While hot dogs and anthems may do little in terms of immediately influencing governmental policy, where they can have an interesting and significant effect is in the realm of social and public exchange. As Guattari substantiates, 'whether or not

there was a real effectiveness hardly matters; certain kinds of action and concentration represent a break with the habitual social processes' (1984: 28-29). In this essay, I have argued that the performative encounter offers precisely such a break. A break though which spaces are opened wherein participants are asked to critically challenge their own perceptions of migration and citizenship by acting out alternatives, which, regardless of their transitory nature, have the capacity to evoke transformative resonances in their participants and constituents long after the events themselves have passed.

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NOTES

[1] According to Wikipedia (one of the only reference sources documenting the phenomenon) the term 'micronation' has been in circulation since at least the 1970's to describe small autonomous state-like entities. There are a few common criteria to micronations: they resemble molecular autonomous nation-states but go unrecognised by official bodies such as governments and international organisations, they are largely ephemeral and ambiguous; often existing predominantly on paper or virtually, however some (like the Transnational Republic) have been extended into the actual realm through currency, passports, a flag, anthem and citizenship. Even less have managed to exist on physical terrain. These physical symbols of sovereign states are seen as a means to legitimise a micronation, however they still often work under the radar of the public and often remain relevant only to their communities of interest (all information sourced from Wikipedia undated).

[2] I understand the term dispositif or structuring device following its use by Bifo Berardi (2005, 67). From this I consider the performative intervention as a performance oriented device or tactic committed to the modification and transformation of particular social relationships via the interruption of narratives

produced through mass communication and media channels. Thus it is a means by which to intervene in, and reconfigure, the messages communicated through dominant media, and the ways that we receive and interpret them.

[3] This is most explicitly enumerated in his last work *Chaosmosis: an ethico-aesthetic paradigm*, although traces of the conceptual arguments dominant in the work can be found disseminated through both his earlier essays (1984) and his collaborations with Gilles Deleuze. For further development of this idea refer to the PhD dissertation of Anja Kanngieser forthcoming 2008.

[4] This included the declaration of third 'safe' countries of origin and/ or transit bordering Germany, which if a migrant had departed from or travelled through disallowed them asylum entry into Germany. This procedure functioned almost on the equivalent to refusing the right to asylum as 'it led to the possibility of rejected asylum seekers being moved from one country to another, which all considered each other as 'safe', without a formal examination of the substance of the individual asylum claim…the most effective barrier against asylum seekers was the introduction of the 'safe third country' rule which made it all but impossible for refugees to reach Germany legally by land' (Marshall, 2000: 98, 124) It also meant that the responsibility to provide evidence of claim to asylum status lay fully with the individual asylum seeker and not with the federal government or its bodies.

[5] I appropriate this term from Massimo de Angelis who understands temporary space-time commons as being an event in which 'decisions become a matter of common sense, not ideological divisions, that is in the sense that is constructed around a shared condition of living, a shared articulation of times' (2007: 23). For further development of this idea refer to the PhD dissertation of Anja Kanngieser forthcoming 2008.

[6] Detournement refers to a key tactic of the Situationst International who define it as 'short for: detournement of preexisting aesthetic elements. The integration of present or past artistic production into a superior construction of a milieu. In this

sense there can be no situationist painting or music, but only a situationist use of these means. In a more primitive sense, detournement within the old cultural spheres is a method of propaganda, a method which testifies to the wearing out and loss of importance of those spheres' (in Knabb 1981: 45-46). Detournement was most commonly seen in the changing of advertising texts, images etc to mean something else. See Debord and Wolman (1956).

[7] Although – and perhaps this is a point that requires a lot more clarity then what I can offer in such a limited context – participation more often then not does not directly solicit migrants and asylum seekers that would be associated with such initiatives. This is to my mind, both problematic for its lack of direct engagement with the sites and occurrences of struggle, and commendable in its avoidance of relativist, paternalistic representational models. For further development of this idea refer to the PhD dissertation of Anja Kanngieser forthcoming 2008.

[8] For the Situationists the 'constructed situation' was 'a moment of life concretely and deliberately constructed by the collective organization of a unitary ambiance and a game of events' (in Knabb, 1981: 45). The constructed situation was theorised as an experiment in the transformation of working and daily conditions. These experiments were to be conscious interventions conducted in everyday terrains, designed to reconfigure quotidian ecologies through self-determination and the liberation of desires. The emancipatory potential of these lay in their engagement of the spectator, who would be energised into participation and consequentially a momentary re-claimation of life from capitalist paradigms.

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Anja Kanngieser is a PhD candidate at the University of Melbourne, Australia. She has been exploring the intersections between aesthetics and activism, specifically focusing on German radical left activist groups that use aesthetic techniques as a means of articulating their dissent in everyday contexts. She is also a collaborator on the Future Archive and Vocabu-laboratories projects, and works with installation and radio.