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On the Researcher-Militant

Colectivo Situaciones

Translated by Sebastian Touza

1

At long last we have learned that power – the state, understood as a privileged locus of change – is not the site, par excellence, of the political. As Spinoza stated long ago, such power is the place of *sadness* and of the most absolute *impotence*. Thus we turn to counterpower. For us, emancipatory thought does not look to seize the state apparatus in order to implement change; rather, it looks to flee those sites, to renounce instituting any centre or centrality.

Struggles for dignity and justice continue: the world, in its entirety, is being questioned and reinvented again. It is this activation of struggle – a true counteroffensive – that encourages the production and diffusion of the hypotheses of counter power.

Popular struggle has recently re-emerged in Argentina. The *piquetes*[i] and the insurrection of December 2001[ii] have accelerated the pace of radicalization.*(1) Commitment to and questions about concrete forms of intervention are once again crucial. This counteroffensive works in multiple ways and confronts not only visible enemies, but also those activists and intellectuals

that intend to encapsulate the social practices of counter power in preestablished schemes.

According to James Scott, the point of departure of radicality is physical, practical, social resistance.[iii] Any power relation of subordination produces encounters between the dominant and the dominated. In these spaces of encounter, the dominated exhibit a *public discourse* that consists in saying that which the powerful would like to hear, reinforcing the appearance of their own subordination, while – silently – in a space *invisible* to power, there is the production of a world of clandestine knowledges *(saberes)* which belongs to the experience of micro-resistance and insubordination.

This happens on a permanent basis except in epochs of rebellion, when the world of the oppressed comes to public light, surprising both friends and strangers.

Thus, the universe of the dominated exists as a scission: as active servility and voluntary subordination, but *also* as a silent language that allows the circulation of jokes, rituals, and knowledges that form the codes of *resistance*.

It is this precedence of resistances that grounds the figure of the 'researcher-militant', whose quest is to carry out theoretical and practical work oriented to co-produce the knowledges and modes of an alternative sociability, beginning with the power *(potencia)**(2) of those *subaltern knowledges*.[iv]

Militant research works neither from its own set of knowledges about the world nor from how things ought to be. On the contrary, the only condition for researcher-militants is a difficult

one: to remain faithful to their 'not knowing'. In this sense, it is an authentic *anti-pedagogy* – like what Joseph Jacotot wanted.[v]

Therefore, the researcher-militant is distinct from both the academic researcher and political militant, not to mention the NGO (non-governmental organizations) humanitarian, the alternative activist, or the simply well intentioned person.

As far from institutional procedures as it is from ideological certainties, the question is rather to organize life according to a series of hypotheses (practical and theoretical) on the ways to (self-) emancipation. To work in autonomous collectives that do not obey rules imposed by academia implies the establishment of a positive connection with subaltern, dispersed, and hidden knowledges, and the production of a body of *practical knowledges of counter power*. This is just the opposite of using social practices as a field of confirmation for laboratory hypotheses. Research militancy, then, is also the art of establishing compositions that endow with *potencia* the quests and elements of alternative sociability.

Academic research is subjected to a whole set of alienating mechanisms that separate researchers from the very *meaning* of their activity: they must accommodate their work to determined rules, topics and conclusions. Funding, supervision, language requirements, bureaucratic red tape, empty conferences and protocol, constitute the conditions in which the practice of *official* research unfolds.

Militant research distances itself from those circuits of academic production – of course, neither opposing nor ignoring them. Far from disavowing or negating university research, it is a question of encouraging another relation with popular knowledges. While knowledges (*conocimientos*) produced by academia usually constitute

a block linked to the market and to scientific discourse (scorning any other forms), what characterizes militant research is the quest for the points in which those knowledges can be composed with popular ones. Militant research attempts to work under alternative conditions, created by the collective itself and by the ties to counter power in which it is inscribed, pursuing its own efficacy in the production of knowledges useful to the struggles.

Militant research thus modifies its *position*: it tries to generate a capacity for struggles to read themselves and, consequently, to recapture and *disseminate* the advances and productions of other social practices.

Unlike the political militant, for whom *politics always takes place in its own separate sphere*, the *researcher-militant* is a character made out of questions, not saturated by ideological meanings and models of the world.

Nor is militant research a practice of *'committed intellectuals'* or of a group of 'advisors' to social movements. The goal is neither to politicize nor intellectualize the social practices. It is not a question of managing to get them to make a leap in order to pass from the social to 'serious politics'.

The trail of multiplicity is the opposite to these images of the leap and *seriousness*: it is neither about teaching nor disseminating *key texts*, but about looking into practices for the emerging traces of a new sociability. If it is separated from practices, the language of militant research gets reduced to the diffusion of a jargon, a fashion, or a new pseudo-academic ideology deprived of situational*(3) anchoring.

From the perspective of its materiality, militant research develops in the forms of *workshops* and collective reading, of the production of the conditions for thinking and disseminating productive texts, in the generation of circuits founded on concrete experiences of struggle and in nuclei of researcher-militants. Since 2000, we have sustained a specific path within the magma of social practices, encounters, and discoveries that have come to be called the "Argentine laboratory", known above all for the insurrection of a new type that took place on the 19th and 20th of December of 2001. In order to disseminate the elaborations that emerged from this path we created our own publishing house, *De Mano en Mano*, **(4) and we have published a series of dossiers, drafts, and books that have nourished research with their effects. The following section picks up a series of hypotheses about the notion of researcher-militant, which emerged at different moments of this path, and which maintain a provisional character since they are still under elaboration.

2

Militant research does not have an *object*. We are conscious of the paradoxical character of this statement – if there is research, something is being researched; if there is nothing to do research on, how can we talk about research? – and, at the same time, we are convinced that this character is precisely what gives potencia to the investigation. In fact, to do research without objectualizing***(5) already implies abandoning the usual image of the researcher, to which the researcher-militant aspires.

In effect, research can be a way to *objectualization* (it is not an originality on our part to confirm this old knowledge; yet, it is worth recalling that this is one of the most serious limits of the usual subjectivity of the researcher). As Nietzsche reminds us, the

theoretical man (and woman) – somewhat more complex than the reading man (and woman) – is the one who perceives action from an entirely external point of view (that is, his/her subjectivity is constituted in a way that is completely independent with respect to that action). Thus, the theoretician works by *attributing* an intention to the subject of the action. Let's be clear: any attribution of this type supposes, with respect to the protagonist of the action that is being observed, an *author* and an *intention*; it confers values and objectives, and, in the end, produces 'knowledges' about the action (and the one who acts).

In this way, criticism remains blind at least with respect to two essential moments: on one side with respect to the (external) *subject* that exercises it. Researchers are not required to investigate themselves. They can construct consistent knowledges *on* the situation as long as, and precisely *thanks to*, their being *outside*, at a prudent distance which supposedly guarantees a certain *objectivity*. This objectivity is authentic and efficacious to the extent that it is nothing but the other side of the *violent* objectualization of the situation they work *upon*.

But there is still another aspect in which criticism remains blind: researchers, in their action of *attributing*, do nothing but adapt the *available resources* of their own research situation to the unknowns that their object presents to them. In this way, researchers set themselves up as *machines* that confer meanings, values, interests, filiations, causes, influences, rationalities, intentions, and unconscious motives to their object.

Both blindnesses, or the same blindness with regard to two points (regarding the *subject that attributes* and the *resources of the attribution*), converge in the configuration of a single operation: a

machine to judge good and evil according to a set of *available values*.

This modality of knowledge production puts us before an evident dilemma. Traditional university research, with its *object*, its *method* of attribution and its *conclusions*, obtains, of course, valuable knowledges – above all descriptive ones – regarding the *objects* on which it does research. But this descriptive operation is in no way subsequent to the formation of the object, because the form of the object itself is already the result of objectualization. This is so to the extent that university research is much more effective when it best uses those objectualizing powers. In this way, *science*, and particularly that science which is called *"social"*, operates more as separator, and reified, of the situations in which it participates than as an internal element in the creation of possible experiences (both practical and theoretical).

Researchers offer themselves as subjects of a *synthesis* of experience. They are the ones who explain the rationality of what happens. And they are preserved as such: as necessary blind spots of such synthesis. They themselves, as *meaning-giving* subjects, remain exempt from any self-examination. They and their resources – their values, their notions, their gaze – are constituted in the machine that classifies, coheres, inscribes, judges, discards, and excommunicates. In the end, the intellectual is the one who 'does justice' to the matters of *truth*, as administration – adaptation – of that which exists regarding the horizons of rationality of the present.

3

We have talked about *commitment* and *militancy*. Is it that we are proposing the superiority of the *political militant* with regard to the university researcher?

We do not believe so. Political militancy is also a practice with an object. As such, it has remained tied to a mode of instrumentality: one that connects itself to other experiences of a subjectivity always already constituted, with prior knowledges – of *strategy* – equipped with universally valid statements which are purely ideological. Its form of being with others is *utilitarian*: there is never *affinity*, always 'agreement'. There is never *encounter*, always 'tactics'. In sum, political militancy – especially that of the "party" – cannot constitute itself as an experience of authenticity. Already at the beginning it gets trapped in *transitivity*: what interests it of an experience is always 'something other' than the actual experience. From this point of view, political militancy, including militants from the Left, is as external, judgmental and objectualizing as university research.

Furthermore, neither does the humanitarian militant – i.e. the one who works within NGOs – escape from these manipulative mechanisms. The now-globalized humanitarian ideology constitutes itself from an idealized image of the *world* already made, *unmodifiable*, in front of which we can only dedicate efforts to those places, more or less *exceptional*, where misery and irrationality still reign.

Not only do the mechanisms unleashed by solidarity humanitarianism foreclose any possible creation, but they also naturalize – via their compassionate charitable resources and their language of *exclusion* – the victimizing objectuality that separates everyone from their subjectifying and productive possibilities.

When we refer to commitment and to the "militant" character of research, we do so in a precise sense, connected to four conditions: (a) the character of the motivation that underpins research; (b) its practical character (elaboration of situated practical hypotheses); (c) the value of what is being researched – the product of research can only be dimensioned in its totality in situations that share as much the problematic being investigated as the constellation of conditions and preoccupations; and (d) its effective procedure – its development is already itself a result, and its result leads to an immediate intensification of the procedures that are being employed.

4

Any *idealization* strengthens the mechanism of objectualization. This is an authentic problem for research militancy.

Idealization always results from the mechanism of attribution (even if the latter is not given under the modality of scientific or political pretensions). Idealization – as any ideologization – expels from the constructed *image* anything that could make it fall as an *ideal* of coherence and plenitude.

As it turns out, however, any ideal, contrary to the beliefs of idealists, is more on the side of death than on the side of life. The ideal amputates reality from life. The concrete – life itself – is partial and irremediably inapprehensible, incoherent and contradictory. As long as it persists in its capacities and *potencias*, *life* does not need to adjust itself to any image that gives it meaning or justifies it. It is the other way round: it is in itself the creative source – not object or depositary – of the values of justice. In fact, any idea of a pure or full subject is nothing but the preservation of that ideal.

This mechanism of idealization is clearly at work in the figure of the excluded as used to define the unemployed in Argentina; as we have pointed out: ”Exclusion is the place that our biopolitical societies produce to be able to include people, groups, and social classes in a subordinate way.”*(6)

Hence idealization conceals an inadvertently conservative operation: hidden behind the purity and vocation for justice that seem to give it origin is, once again, the root of dominant values. Hence the righteous appearance of idealists: they want to do justice, that is to say, they desire to materialize, effectuate, those values they hold as good. Idealists merely project those values on the idealized (at the moment when that which was multiple and complex turns into *object*, of an ideal) without coming to interrogate themselves about their own values; that is to say, without having a subjective *experience* that transforms them. This mechanism comes to reveal itself as the most serious obstacle for the researcher-militant: originating in subtle and almost imperceptible forms, idealization gradually produces an *unbridgeable distance*. This is so to the extent that researcher-militants only see what they have projected into what is already a plenitude.

That is why this activity cannot exist unless very serious work is done *on* the research *collective* itself; in other words, the latter cannot exist without seriously investigating itself, without modifying itself, without reconfiguring itself in the social practices in which it takes part, without reviewing the ideals and values it holds dear, without permanently criticizing its ideas and readings, in the end, without developing practices in all the possible directions.**(7)

This ethical dimension points to the very complexity of research militancy: the subjective work of deconstructing any inclination

toward objectualization. In other words*: doing research without an object*.

As in *genealogy*, it is a question of working at the level of the 'criticism of values'. It is about penetrating them and destroying 'their statues', as Nietzsche affirms. But this work that is oriented by – and towards – the creation of values is not done by mere 'contemplation'. It requires a radical critique of current values. That is why it implies an effort of *deconstruction* of the dominant forms of perception (*interpretation*, *valorization*). Therefore, there is no creation of values without production of a subjectivity capable of submitting itself to a radical criticism.

5

One question makes itself evident: is it possible to engage in such research without at the same time setting in motion a process of *falling in love*? How would a tie between two experiences be possible without a strong feeling of *love* or *friendship*?

Certainly, the experience of research militancy resembles that of the person in love, on condition that we understand by *love* that which a long philosophical tradition – the materialist one – understands by it: that is, not something that just happens to one with respect to another but a process which, in its constitution, *takes* two or more.*(8) Such a love relation *participates* without the mediation of an intellectual decision: rather, the existence of two or more finds itself pierced by this shared experience. This is not an illusion, but an authentic experience of anti-utilitarianism, which converts the 'own' into the 'common'.

In love, in friendship, as opposed to the mechanisms that we have been describing up to this point, there is neither objectuality nor

instrumentalism. Nobody restrains him or herself from what the tie can do, nor is it possible to leave it uncontaminated. One does not experience friendship or love in an innocent way: we all come out from them reconstituted. These *potencias* – love and friendship – have the power to constitute, qualify, and remake the subjects they catch.

This love – or friendship – constitutes itself as a relation that renders undefined what until that moment was kept as individuality, composing a figure integrated by more than one individual body. And, at the same time, such a qualification of the individual bodies that participate in this relation causes all the mechanisms of abstraction – deployments that turn the bodies into quantified exchangeable objects – so characteristic of the capitalist market as the other objectualizing mechanisms we have mentioned.

That is why we consider this *love* to be a condition of militant research

We usually refer to this process of *friendship* or *falling in love* with the – less compromising – name of *composition*. Unlike *articulation*, *composition* is not merely intellectual.*(9) It is based neither in interests nor in criteria of convenience (political or other). Unlike accords and alliances (strategic or tactic ones, partial or total) founded in textual agreements, composition is more or less inexplicable, and goes beyond anything that can be said about it. In fact, at least while it lasts, it is much more intense than any merely political or ideological compromise.

Love and friendship tell us about the value of quality over quantity: the collective body composed of other bodies does not increase its *potencia* according to the mere quantity of its individual

components, but in relation to the *intensity* of the tie that unites them.

6

Love and friendship: Research militancy does not intend to be a new *party line*. It works – *necessarily* – on another plane.

If we sustain the distinction between 'politics' (understood as struggle for power) and the social practices in which processes of production of sociability or values come into play, we can then distinguish the political militant (who founds his/her discourse in some set of certainties) from the researcher-militant (who organizes his/her perspective beginning with critical questions about those certainties).

Yet, this is the distinction that is often lost from sight when a social practice is presented as a model and carelessly turned into the source of a *party line*.

This is how some believe they have seen the birth of a "situationist" line, as the idealized product of language or even the *jargon* of the publication and image that, apparently, the notebook*(10) transmits – at least among some readers – of the experience of struggle we have worked with.

Detractors and supporters of this new line have turned it into the motive of disputes and conspiracies. In this regard, we can't help but admit that, of all the possible outcomes of this research, these *reactions* are the ones that motivate us least, both because of the manifest lack of productivity that results from such repudiations and supports and because of the form in which such idealizations (positive or negative alike) usually replace a more critical look at

those who make them. Thus, a too finished position is rapidly adopted in the front of what intends to be an opening exercise.

7

Let's take one more step in the construction of the concept of research *without an object*, of a thought that resists becoming a 'knowledge'. *Interiority and immanence* are not necessarily identical processes.

Inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion, are (if we are allowed such an expression) categories of the *dominant ideology*: they usually hide much
more than they reveal. Research militancy is not about being *inside* a social practice, but working in *immanence*.

Let's say that the difference can be presented in the following terms: the *inside* (and so the *outside*) defines a position organized *from* a certain *limit* that we consider *relevant*.

Inside and outside refer to a *location* of a body or element in relation to a disjunction or a boundary. To be inside is also – in this line – to share a common property, which makes us belong to the same *set*.

This system of references raises questions about the place where we are *situated*: nationality, social class, or even the position in which we choose to situate ourselves with regard to, say, the next elections, the military invasion of Colombia or cable television programming.

In the extreme, 'objective' *belonging* (that which derives from the observation of a common property) and 'subjective' belonging (that which derives from choosing with regard to) come together for the

happiness of the social sciences: if we *are* unemployed workers we can choose to enter a *piquetero* movement; if we *belong to* the middle class we can choose *to be part of* a neighborhood assembly. Through *determination* – common belonging to the same group, in this case social class – choice (in the group of commons with which we will group) becomes possible – and desirable.

In both cases *being inside* implies respecting a pre-existent limit that distributes places and belonging in a more or less involuntary way. It is not so much a question of disavowing the possibilities that derive from the moment of choice – which can be, as in the case of this example, highly subjectivating – as it is about distinguishing the mere 'being' and its 'inside' (or 'outside', it doesn't matter) of the mechanisms of subjective production that spring up from disobeying these destinies. At the limit, it is not so much a question of reacting in front of already codified options as it is about producing the terms of the situation ourselves.

In this sense it is worthwhile to present the image of immanence as something other than the mere being inside.

Immanence refers to a modality of *inhabiting* the *situation* and operates from *composition* – love or friendship – in order to bring about *new possible materials* of such a situation. Immanence is, then, a constitutive co-belonging that passes transversally or diagonally through the representations of the 'inside' and the 'outside'. As such it does not derive from being there, but requires an operation of inhabiting, of composing.

Summing up: the notions of *immanence, situation, composition* are internal to the experience of research militancy. Names which are useful for operations that organize a common and, above all, *constitutive* becoming. If in another experience they become jargon

of a new party line or categories of a fashionable philosophy – something that does not interest us in the least – they will, for sure, obtain a new meaning on the basis of those *uses* which are not ours.

The operational difference between the 'inside' of representation (foundation of *belonging* and *identity*) and the *connection* of immanence (*constitutive becoming*) has to do with the greater disposition this last form confers us to participate in new social practices.

8

It seems like we have come to produce a difference between *love-friendship* and the forms of objectification against which the – precarious, we insist – figure of the researcher-militant rises up.

Nevertheless, we have not yet entered the fundamental issue of the ideologization of *confrontation*.

Struggle activates capacities, resources, ideals, and solidarities. As such it tells us about a vital disposition, about dignity. In it, the risk of death is neither pursued nor desired. That is why the meaning of the dead comrades is never full, but painful. This dramatic character of struggle is, however, banalized when confrontation is *ideologized*, to the point of being postulated as an exclusionary meaning.

When this happens there is no room for research. As it is well known, ideology and research have opposite structures: while the first is constituted from a set of certainties, the second only exists on the basis of a grammar of questions.

Nevertheless, struggle–the necessary, noble struggle–does not in itself lead toward the exaltation of confrontation as the dominant meaning of life. There is no doubt that the limit may appear somewhat narrow in the case of an organization in permanent struggle, such as a *piquetero* organization. And yet, to take this point for granted would be to prejudge.

Unlike the militant subjectivity that is usually sustained in a given sense by the extreme polarisation of life – the ideologisation of confrontation*(11) – experiences that seek to construct another sociability are very active in trying not to fall into the *logic of confrontation*, according to which the multiplicity of experience is reduced to this dominant signifier.

Confrontation by itself *does not create values*. As such, it does not go beyond the distribution of the dominant values.

The result of a war shows who will appropriate existence. Who will have the property rights on the existing goods and values.

If struggle does not *alter* the 'structure of meanings and values' we are only in presence of a change of roles, which is a guarantee of survival for the structure itself.

Once we have arrived at this point, two completely different images of justice are sketched out before us, and in the end that is what it is about. On one side, the struggle is for the ability to use the *judging machine*. To do justice is to attribute to oneself what is considered just. It is to interpret in a different way the distribution of existing values. The other side suggests that it is a question of becoming creator of values, of experiences, of worlds.

That is why any struggle that is not idealized has those two directions that start from self-affirmation: toward ‘inside’ and toward ‘outside’.

9

Militant research does not look for a *model* of experience. Moreover, it affirms itself against the existence of such ideals. It will be said with good reason that it is one thing to declaim this principle and something very different to achieve it in practice. One could also conclude that – and here is where our doubts start – in order for this noble purpose to become reality it would be necessary to make ‘our criticism’ explicit. If the demand is looked at carefully, one would see the extent to which what is being asked of us is to *keep* the *model* – now in a negative way – in order to compare the *real experience* to an *ideal model*, a mechanism that social sciences use to extract their ‘critical judgments’.

As can be seen, to develop a new image of thought from a practical experience of knowledge production is not a minor issue, since it concerns forms of justice (and judgment is nothing but the judicial form of justice). This article cannot offer anything that resembles a juridical event, nor does it provide resources to make judgments on other social practices. Rather, the opposite is true: if we as ‘authors’ have pretended anything at all, that has been to offer a diametrically opposite image of justice, founded in composition. What is this *good for*? There are no preliminary answers.

Till always

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Check our website www.situaciones.org or send us an email to colectivo@situaciones.org to consult our works, access information on our published books, and order them.

This article is composed of fragments of two different articles which addressed the mode of intervention that we intend to create: militant research. We reproduce parts of "For a Politics beyond Politics", an essay published in the book Contrapoder: una introducción*, edited by our Colectivo and published by Ediciones De Mano en Mano in November of 2001. We also pick up a good deal of the text "On Method" which prefaces the book* La Hipótesis 891: Más allá de los piquetes*, co-written by our Colectivo and the Movement of Unemployed Workers of Solano, also published by De Mano en Mano, in November 2002.*

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[i] *La Hipótesis 891*, the book cited above, deals with what has been opened by this experience of struggle and thought known as "piqueteros".

[ii] See our book *19 y 20. Apuntes para el nuevo protagonismo social,* published by De Mano en Mano in April 2002.

*(1) The night of December 19th, 2001, thousands of Argentineans occupied the streets, squares and public places of the major cities. The following day, after three dozen had died in street fights with the police, president Fernando de la Rúa resigned. The revolt boosted the period of intense social creativity that began with the formation of the unemployed workers movement – also known as "piqueteros" for their practice of blocking roads – in the second half of the 1990s. In the month that followed the revolt, hundreds

of popular assemblies sprung up in neighbourhoods across the country. Many factories and businesses that had gone bankrupt were taken by their workers and began to run under their control. Several of these initiatives came together forming circuits of trade based in solidarity principles, helping to provide the necessities of life for the millions who had been marginalized from an economy crippled by its obedient observance of the recommendations coming from the International Monetary Fund and other transnational ”development” agencies. (Tr.)

[iii] James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts,* London, New Haven 1992.

*(2) In Spanish there are two words for ”power”: “poder” and “potencia”, which derive from the Latin words “potestas” and “potentia”. Colectivo Situaciones’ understanding of power is rooted in this distinction they take from Spinoza. While “potencia” is a dynamic, constituent dimension, “poder” is static, constituted. Potencia defines our power to do, to affect, and be affected, while the mechanism of representation that constitutes “poder” separates “potencia” from the bodies that are being represented. To preserve the emphasis of this distinction, the Spanish word “potencia” is used, where appropriate, throughout this chapter. (Tr.)

[iv] The figure of the “*researcher-militant*” was presented for the first time in Miguel Benasayag and Diego Sztulwark, *Política y situación. De la potencia al contrapoder,* Buenos Aires: Ediciones de mano en mano 2002.

[v] See in particular the beautiful pages of the book by Jacques Rancière*, The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation* , Stanford/California 1991. For Jacotot all pedagogies are founded in an ‘explication’ of something given by someone

from a superiority of intelligence, and produces, above all, 'explicated kids'. On the contrary, 'ignorant schoolmasters' teach without explicating. They can teach what they do not know because they organize their experiences according to a radically different principle: the equality of intelligence.

*(3) Each situation is part of a system of relations, networks, connexions, transmissions and distributions of power. Cf. Colectivo Situaciones, *19 y 20. Apuntes para el nuevo protagonismo social*: Situation refers to a capacity to cut off the space-time that is "both condition and product of the emergence of meaning" (p. 19). "Situation does not mean local. The situation consists in the practical affirmation that the whole does not exist separate from the part, but in the part" (p. 26). "The situation can be thought of as a 'concrete universal'." "We can only know and intervene in the universal through a subjective operation of interiorizaton from which it is possible to encounter the world as a concrete element of the situation. Any other form of thinking the world – as external to the situation – condemns us to an abstract perception and practical impotence" (p. 30n.). (Tr.).

**(4) Literally, "De mano en mano" means "from hand to hand". The publishing house was created by the student group El Mate, to which the members of Colectivo Situaciones originally belonged. Mate is a South American infusion that is usually drunk in group from a gourd that is passed from hand to hand. (Tr.)

***(5) The authors use "objetualizar" in the double sense of transformation into an object of research and to be transformed into an object as opposed to becoming a subject. (Tr.)

*(6) Cf. *19 y 20: Apuntes para el nuevo protagonismo social,* p. 100n. The excluded are constructed as subjects of needs, uncapable of

creative self-activity, whose actions always have an *a priori* interpretation. The concepts of unemployed and excluded, which come from the external gaze of the government, the media, NGOs, and most academics, have the effect of reducing the intensity and power of the real people who have been impoverished by neoliberalism. In contrast, the unemployed workers movements call themselves "piqueteros", a subjectivity not limited to the confrontations that are part of the road blocks it refers to but which designates a struggle for dignity that goes beyond a request of incorporation in the society of wage-labour. (Tr.)

**(7) These multidirectional practices, each of which has constituted a significant moment in the development of Colectivo Situaciones, include joining in processes of collective reflection some of the most creative expressions of Argentina's new protagonism, including the unemployed workers' movement of the district of Solano, in Greater Buenos Aires; the peasants' movement of the northern province of Santiago del Estero; HIJOS, the organization of the children of the disappeared during the dictatorship; Creciendo Juntos, an alternative school run by militant teachers; several instances from the neighbourhood assemblies and the now dismantled barter network, and a number of other groups, including alternative media and art collectives such as Grupo de Arte Callejero. Colectivo Situaciones' practices have also involved encounters with intellectuals both in Argentina – including Horacio González, León Rozitchner, and the editors of the journal *La Escena Contemporánea* – and abroad – including Antonio Negri, Paolo Virno, Maurizio Lazzarato, John Holloway, the historic leaders of Uruguay's legendary MLN Tupamaros, and several collectives, including the Italian DeriveApprodi and the Spanish Precarias a la Deriva. Many of these encounters have resulted in published interviews. (Tr.)

*(8) This materialist tradition of the concept of love includes Spinoza and the recent readings of his philosophy by Antonio Negri and Gilles Deleuze. Negri points out that love constitutes the exhuberance of being in Spinoza's ethical materialism (cf. Antonio Negri, *The Savage Anomaly: the power of Spinoza's metaphysics and politics*, Minneapolis 1991, p. 152ss.). For Deleuze and Felix Guattari, love and friendship define the relation of immanence between the philosopher and the concept s/he creates (*What is Philosophy?* New York 1994, pp. 1-12). (Tr.)

*(9) The critique of articulation is developed in full by Colectivo Situaciones in the last chapter of their book *19 y 20: Apuntes para el nuevo protagonismo social*. Articulation is the type of relation established by hegemony, in which the different parts of a network are ordered around a centre. In this relation, being part of the network constitutes a norm and dispersion appears as a defficiency of the parts. In contrast, relations of composition lead to the formation of multiple counterpowers which form diffuse and eccentric networks. (Tr.)

*(10) This refers to the series of research notebooks Situaciones, published by De mano en mano. Each of these notebooks summarizes the militant research activity of Colectivo Situaciones with a different grassroots movement. (Tr.)

*(11) The movements that compose what Colectivo Situaciones defines as Argentina's new protagonism, those with which the collective has been practicing research militancy, are characterized by a refusal to constitute themselves as frontal opponents. Like the Zapatistas, they reject the logic of confrontation and, instead, carefully invest in the creation of experiences, practices, and projects that affirm the desire to expand life. "Between the power that destroys and the practices of counterpower there is a

fundamentally asymmetric relation" (Colectivo Situaciones, *El silencio de los caracoles,* www.situaciones.org accessed 11 January 2004). (Tr.)