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## Lectures and discussions

30/04/2004 - 30/04/2004 Convent dels Àngels

### The Revolution (will not be) Televised

*"You will not be able to stay at home, brother, because the revolution will not be televised: the revolution will be live."*

(Gill Scott Heron sings The Revolution will not be Televised, 1974)

This symposium brings together a historical and political narrative whose fundamental myth is located in the appearance of portable video equipment and the effervescence of new decentralized modes of communication in the 1970s. We might understand this moment as one in which a new (counter) informative "paradigm" emerges in the fields of communication and the arts. This paradigm is rooted in specific conceptual art practices and institutional critique as well as in the countercultural and anti-institutional events related to the struggles of '68. With this new paradigm there began innovative practices that experimented with the communicative dimension for interpolating and contributing to the confirmation of new social and political subjects.

During the subsequent two decades, these experiences from the 70s nurtured the new territory of independent television (Paper Tiger TV, Deep Dish TV...), encouraged certain artistic "time-based" practices, and served as precedent for later communicative experiments, from local television via cable to «tactical media».

Part of this formidable legacy of activist and decentralized communication is most recently figured in the guerilla tactics of communication and of semiotics as well as in those communicative experiences occurring with the rise of the global movement and the social movements of the last generation. These develop communicative practices and artifacts indissociable from new subjectivities: media-activism, the Indymedia network, and the large specter of the recent experiences of independent radio, television and the web.

#### PARTICIPANTS

**Carles Ameller** is Professor of Film, Video and Electronic Art at the Fine Arts faculty of the Universitat of Barcelona. He was a member of the collective Video-Nou / Servei de Vídeo Comunitari and has published diverse texts on independent video, art and communication media.

**Franco Berardi "Bifo"**, philosopher, is a distinguished participant and analyst of the Italian "77 movement." Co-founder of the Rekombinant website, his books in Spanish include: La fábrica de la infelicidad. Nuevas formas de trabajo y movimiento global and forthcoming: Telectreet: máquina imaginativa no homologada and El sabio, el mercader y el guerrero.

**Dee Dee Halleck** is co-founder of the alternative television stations Paper Tiger TV and Deep Dish TV, as well as a collaborator in Indymedia from Seattle. She is an important reference for the history of alternative artistic/activist media in the United States.

**Naomi Klein**, Canadian, is a journalist, author of No Logo and Fences and Windows: Dispatches from the Front Line of the Globalization Debate. Her texts and interventions regularly appear in all forms of communication and academic media and are disseminated both in activist circles and through social movements.

**Avi Lewis** is a journalist on Canadian public television and a documentalist. Director, in collaboration with Naomi Klein, of the film Ex-propiedad, which was realized in the period between the popular insurrections of 2001 and the most recent Argentine elections.

This symposium is articulated in relation to the research project "1969--... Some hypothesis on artistic and political practices in the Spanish state," which takes place within the frame of Disagreements: On art, policy and the public sphere in Spain, a collaborative project between Arteleku (San Sebastián), the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (Barcelona), and the Universidad Internacional de Andalucía UNIA (Sevilla).

Campaign from Lliga de Catalunya, videobús, 1977.  
Picture by Carles Ameller. Video-Nou / Servei de Vídeo Comunitari

Additional documentation

[Summary \(pdf\)](#)

### Further information

MACBA Public Programs  
tlf. (+34)93 412 08 10 (ext. 382)  
servcult@macba.cat

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### Program

10:30 am

FRANCO BERARDI BIFO (Bologna).

From the "movement as communicative agent" (Italian rebellions from '77) and the phenomena of Italian free radio to the contemporary experience of Telestreets.

12:30 pm

CARLES AMELLER (Barcelona).

The experience of Vídeo Nou / Servei de Vídeo Comunitari. The historical background of the communitarian video movement of the 70s and its manifestation in the Spanish state.

5:30 pm

DEE DEE HALLECK (New York). The American experience. Guerilla television from the 70s, independent television and satellite emissions in the 80s (Paper Tiger Television, Deep Dish), and the appearance of Indymedia in Seattle at the end of the 90s.

7:30 pm

Roundtable discussion: ACTIVIST AND DECENTRALIZED COMMUNICATION IN THE GLOBAL MOVEMENT. With the participation independent communication nodes from the Spanish state (Indymedia, Global...). Coordinated by Amador Fernández-Savater and José Pérez de Lama.

10 pm

Public discussion with NAOMI KLEIN and AVI LEWIS, illustrated with fragments of their unedited film *The Take*, on their experience in Argentina.

### SUMMARY

The symposium was proposed in relation to two axes:

On the one hand, there was the necessity of historically situating the appearance of the communicative paradigm in the political and cultural context that was created after May '68. This paradigm corresponds to the historical transition to post-industrial capitalism (or postfordism) that is characterized by the new centrality of the cultural, the affective and the communicative in capitalist production—that is, the emergence of immaterial labor and the appearance of a new political subject that breaks with the imaginary of the classical proletariat. Hence the new informational paradigm is relevant to new forms of sociality and postfordist production in a larger sense as well as to artistic practices that adopt informational methodologies corresponding to technological innovations and the appearance of portable audiovisual equipment.

On the other hand, through a series of case studies the symposium proposed a disperse geography in which the communicative paradigm is implemented—Italy, the United States, and Spain—such that from its beginnings a new global geography is already configured that relativizes the idea of cultural capital and prefigures present networks in which the center-periphery dichotomy is dissolved.

From the Italian experience, Franco Berardi "Bifo" explained the transition to the end of the state monopoly of communication after the 1975 laws, which liberalized the airwaves and permitted the sudden increase in radio broadcasters between 1975-1977. It was a moment of great social and political agitation in Italy that resulted in the events of '77 (motivated by a crisis in parliament's political representation that derived from the Communist and Christian-democratic pact, which prevented an oppositional space and did not correspond to the social demands of the moment). This situation of social violence was made worse by the activity of the Red Brigades and engendered an epoch of conformism, political paralysis, violence and repression that is recognized as the "years of lead." Contrary to the habitual discourse that claims that the disappearance of the state monopoly opened the way for privatization (and the new monopoly of Berlusconi) and contrary to the counter-informational model that identifies itself with the methods of activist communication, Berardi stated that in reality the media process is not a war between two actors—hegemonic and non-hegemonic respectively, in the manner of David and Goliath—but rather is expressed in micro-battles whose effects operate on the imaginary and symbolic orders.

The effects of opinion are not produced in a determinist manner but are instead expressed in paradoxical and unexpected ways. Hence what matters is not the quantity, or the size or the monopoly, but information's symbolic effects, which can be unexpected, including from a position of relatively limited power. The impact on the imaginary of a small initiative can be enormous and vice versa. The objective of a communicative and politically transformative project is to construct an alliance between micro-minorities through which to produce a majority that is capable of triumphing over the large corporate monopolies. It has to do with a process of the recombination of information and of creating new forms even in a physical sense. In that vein Berardi recalled that information signifies "to give form." The present changes in attainable technology, the fragmentation in the reception of media, and the proliferation of local television provide the conditions for a break with the stability of monopoly and corporate power in the media and for the emergence of new alliances between minority media.

Carles Ameller reconstructed the experience of the Video Nou collective in 1970s Barcelona that later became the Servei de Vídeo Comunitari. Video Nou-SVC has served as a mythic reference for new practices of activist and decentralized communication in Spain. The collective began in the context of the seventies movements in Spain, right at the beginning of the transition. It was a multidisciplinary collective close to social movements. Its work proposed experimentation with ways of creating public access to information and generating participatory processes of media representation and self-representation through diverse collectives, unions and neighborhood movements. Its video bus project, an itinerant video projection space, is a good example. It consisted in a bus adapted to showing videos in both neighborhoods and public spaces.

Dee Dee Halleck narrated her pioneering experience in the creation of local television stations with public access criteria that have served as a reference point for alternative communication practices such as Paper Tiger TV and Deep Dish TV. Halleck distinguishes between mass media and consumer media and proposes that there exists a desire for autonomy and self-production on the part of different groups. In the North American context of the neoliberal Reagan-Bush era, Paper Tiger TV performed the function of preserving a space for the freedom of opinion and criticism. These public televisions have been crucial for the development of independent creation in the United States and for the development of audiovisual artistic practices as well as the formation of an information and communication culture, which has served as the basis for the emergence of new networks such as Indymedia that began in Seattle in 1999. Just as Berardi proposed in his presentation, the articulation of new social movements through a network and, in particular, the anticapitalist movement can in itself be understood as a communicative apparatus. The new forms of organization and sociality and the technological conditions of an epoch are indissociable elements.

The subsequent roundtable on Indymedia brought together members from various nodes of the network in Spain and has possibly been the first such meeting since the first nodes' emergence in our country in 2000-2001. The discussion revolved around three issues: 1. the surpassing of the model of counter-information; 2. the link with everyday political activity vis-à-vis a conception of movements' activities in which they are seen as resulting from moments of necessity that respond to large events of massive repercussions such as international summits; and finally, 3. the issue of information saturation and the question as to the creation of knowledge within this context.

The debate proposed a reflection on networks as a space we inhabit, as a space of production, creation and communication that is also linked to the quotidian and affective; that is to say it proposes a rupture with the separation of the political and the productive versus the intimate and quotidian. In this sense the network stands out in its capacity to transform existing geographical relations and to propose other geographical imaginaries such as, for example, the case of the Indymedia-Estrecho node with which the geopolitics of national borders are redrawn. Yet the everyday functioning of Indymedia proposes questions in relation to the construction of public space and the reproduction of a relatively narrow space for militancy; in relation to whether the contents really contribute to other forms of doing or are just noise; and in relation to their effectiveness in the construction of the imaginary. The debate was concluded with a discussion about the managing of individualized information on the part of the user and its other side, which is the rupture with an idea of community.

In the evening, the first European screening of the film "La Toma" (The Take) by Avi Lewis and Naomi Klein took place. The film narrates the experience of the self-generated occupation of factories during the crisis in Argentina and puts forth these initiatives as cooperative and sustainable models for a political practice and economic alternative in the face of capitalist privatization. The discussion on the film suggested some questions as to the representation of the workers as victors or conquered and demonstrated a mode of critical intervention within television in a manner respectful to the struggles the film attempts to represent.

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#### Price

Free admittance. Limited seating. Simultaneous translation service.

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#### Related activities

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**Free licences in art issues**

**Adrift (through the circuits of feminine precariousness)**