

Presented at Gender and Power in the New Europe, the 5th European Feminist Research Conference. August 20-24, 2003, Lund University, Sweden.

Accessed From
<http://www.sindominio.net/karakola/antigua_casa/english/lund_paper.htm>.



Z A P

Zapatista Autonomy Project

<http://cril.mitotedigital.org/zapatismo>

POSITIONS, SITUATIONS, SHORT-CIRCUITS:



A DELIBERATE SPACE

MARIA SERRANO & SILVIA LOPEZ

La Eskalera Karakola, Madrid

PROLOGUE POSITIONS, SITUATIONS, SHORT-CIRCUITS.

«Life in this society being, at best, an utter bore, and no aspect of this society being in any way relevant to queers, there remains to the civic-minded, responsible and thrill-seeking queer only to overthrow the government, eliminate the money system, institute complete automation and destroy compulsive heterosexuality.» (SCUM Manifesto, sort of. Valerie Solanas, 1967. Adaptation from Karakola)

The sexual uprising of Stonewall has reached its turning point in the reordering of habits, spaces and bodies under I.W.C. (Integrated World Capitalism). Once-object sexualities are every day more presented as an inconsequential option in the free market, a prefab bedroom set (pink or blue?) with which to redecorate the lack of an intense, joyful political life free to all.

In a democracy defined by free choice, when free choice is defined by consumption, our sexualities and our bodies -with all their critical potency for challenging the institutions which administer affections and resources- have become tidy packages on the shelves of the global boutique.

Existing norms and classifications again and again provide raw materials for capitalism. What is really obscene these days is to be queer and poor, woman and restless, others and uncontrolled...

The image of the queers, the freaks, the wild ones, the cyborgs, the hysterics, the truck-drivers, the frigid ones and the loose ones, the ones in broken high-heels and the barefoot ones assaulting the supermarket of the world, the privatized garden and the wedding ceremony is our most cherished dream. To be divine is to always push the limits, experiment with the loss of composure which exposes the sexual discipline of Home and Crust; it is to disorganize anew all classifications.

Rights are a useful but insufficient charity, perverse in their disciplinary capacity. Now that capital has been embodied in us with hushed and persistent violence: (re)productive body, consumer body, clean and disinfected body which has repressed the ghost of stigma and death, versatile and accelerated body, it is time to ask: Is a different body possible?

It must be, because here we are.

We occupy. We occupy and we talk about territories. We situate ourselves as a node crossed by thousands of circuits. Circuits and

References

- Alexander, M. Jacqui and Talpade Mohanty, Chandra (eds.) (1997): *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*. Routledge, London.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria (1987): *Borderlands, La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco, Aunt Lute.
- Bhavnani, Kum-Kum (ed.) (2001): *Feminism & Race*. Oxford Readings in Feminism.
- Brah, Avtar (2002): "Global Mobilities, local predicaments: globalization and the critical imagination," *Feminist Review* 70.
- Butler, J. (1993): "Críticamente subversiva" en *Sexualidades transgresoras. Una antología de estudios queer*. Ed. Icaria. Barcelona, 2002
- Butler, J. (1990- 1999): *El género en disputa. El feminismo y la subversión de la identidad*. Ed. Paidós. Buenos Aires, 2001
- Deleuze, G. (1995): *Conversaciones*. Ed. Pre-textos. Valencia, 1999.
- Deleuze, G. (1977): *Diálogos*. Ed Pre- textos, Valencia, 1980.
- Deleuze, G. y Guattari, F. (1972): *El anti edipo. Capitalismo y Esquizofrenia*. Barcelona, 1998. -Foucault, M. (1988): *El Pensamiento del afuera*. Ed. Pre-textos. Valencia, 2000.
- Foucault, M. (1977): *Historia de la sexualidad. Vol I La voluntad de saber*, Ed. Siglo veintiuno, Madrid.
- Historia de la sexualidad. Vol II El uso de los placeres*; Ed. Siglo veintiuno, Madrid.
- Historia de la sexualidad. Vol III El cuidado de sí*. Ed. Siglo veintiuno, Madrid.
- Hables Gray, Chris (2002): *Cyborg citizen*. Routledge, NY.
- Haraway, D. (1991): *Ciencia, cyborgs y mujeres. La reinención de la naturaleza*. Ed. Cátedra, Madrid, 1995. p. 248-249.
- Haraway, Donna: "Las promesas de los monstruos: Una política regeneradora para otros inapropiados/bles," *Política y Sociedad* 30, 1999, Madrid.
- Hardt, Michael (1999): "Affective Labor," *Boundary 2*
- De Lauretis, Teresa: *Diferencias. Etapas de un camino a través del feminismo*. Ed Horas y horas, 2000, Madrid. p. 63.
- Plant, Sadie (1997): *Ceros + Unos*. Ediciones Destino, Barcelona.
- Preciado. B. (2002): *El manifiesto contra- sexual*. Ed. Ópera prima. Barcelona.
- Lorde, Audre (1982): *Zami a New Spelling of My Name*, Trumansburg, NY, The Crossing Press.
- Sandoval, Chela: "New Sciences. Cyborg Feminism and the Methodology of the oppressed," in C. Gray (ed.) *The Cyborg Handbook*, Routledge, 1995, London.
- Sassen, Sakia (2003): *Contrageografías de la globalización. Género y ciudadanía en los circuitos transfronterizos*. Ed. Traficantes de sueños, Madrid
- Slavoj Zizeck (1999): *El espinoso sujeto. El centro ausente de la ontología política*. Ed. Paidós. Buenos Aires, 2001

accelerated currents. We are in the very mouth of the monster. We move, we decide, we talk politics. We situate ourselves and unmask our own bodies, our own lives, our own inhabiting of this city, this neighborhood, this social center.

While the vertiginous current of global capitalism impregnates every nook and cranny of our existence, submitting it to the virtual display window of the market-world, to the state of permanent global war, to the complete precarization of our lives, to the abysmal technocracy of the bureaucratic apparatus, to the privatization of services and of social and public goods, to isolation and solitude, to politics which can only be conceived in terms either of parties or else of super-hip politicking like that of the NGOs, to boredom and to being "entertained," to the appropriation of our knowledge and to copyrights, to compulsory heterosexuality, euphoric and erroneous...

But we short circuit, we move the currents into our own bodies; we have situated ourselves. In the same way we situate ourselves in urban space. We situate ourselves and we begin to speak about precarious work, about the wild ones and the dangerous ones, the housewives and the agitators, the frigid ones, the lesbians, the transsexuals, the married ones and the single ones, those that come and go, the whores and the queers and the feminists assaulting the global display-market in open revolt, subverting normalized "life-styles." We situate ourselves because the personal is political. Because we want to launch ourselves into the open insurrection of our lives. Social centers and public spaces are indispensable for the expression and the constant experimentation of a new way of 'doing city' which is not considered in the diplomatic agenda of the scenic capital. Because we are part of these territories we daily struggle to construct them and reorganize them. Plastic designs of the world we want. Brutal expansion of constrained desires. Legitimate reappropriation of our own living space, our city, our world...

For this we occupy, for this the social centers...

The point of departure, of encounter, of crossing paths of which we speak is in the neighborhood of Lavapiés, Calle Embajadores number 40. A feminist social center occupied there in 1996. In these almost seven years la Karakola has been a daily experiment in constant creation and action, and with its comings and goings, with its limitations and its changes, it has housed an infinitude of projects: we speak about work and precariousness, about war and globalization, about "making city" and urbanism, about sexist aggressions and the abuse of women, about autonomy and self-management among women, about cooperation and the circulation of knowledge, about lesbian visibility and identities, about

migration and borders... Meetings, assemblies, workshops, encounters, movies, videos, talks, actions..., but above all a gamble made, a bet placed decisively upon the collective, upon cooperation and subversion of the established lifestyles which bind us, which must be again resituated, again disemboweled in order to be able to begin, perhaps, to reinvent nature.

INTRODUCTION SPACES FOR DAILY LIFE

La Eskalera Karakola is a women's occupied house in a multiethnic working class neighborhood in the center of Madrid. For almost seven years, la Karakola has served as a convergence point and a point of departure for feminist thought and political action both in the neighborhood and in the far-flung feminist networks in which we participate. An open and changing collective of women -mostly young, some not so young, of various sexualities, nationalities, class and educational backgrounds- maintain the house as a public space for feminism, and from this space we generate projects which extend beyond the house itself.

The Karakola has housed projects investigating the working conditions and urban experience of migrant women, debates about the transformations of the LGBT movement, lesbian marriage and the "pink market," discussions about the feminist grounding for antimilitarist interventions. We have introduced the workshop "Tools against Racism" into local social movements, encouraging ourselves to constantly investigate our own discourses. We have initiated an ongoing campaign against violence against women which insists upon looking at the many and complex ways in which "violence" and "security" are constructed. We participate in a neighborhood network proposing socially inclusive urbanistic alternatives to the 'rehabilitation' currently under way. We have participated actively and critically in the lock-ins of "*sin papeles*" in Madrid. These and hundreds of other investigations, mobilizations, discussions and publications have arisen from the crucible that is the Karakola. We insist that all these apparently diverse concerns are intimately related, and we attempt to trace the lines of their relationship, articulating them within the feminist and the global resistance movements, refusing to separate the academic from the activist, the local struggle from the global context. We propose to maintain and improve a self-managed feminist space by and for women in the neighborhood of Lavapies. But what is a feminist space?

Urban space hides itself in an opaque neutrality. We move through it so naturally that it is difficult for us to see that this space is not

been tethered, an easy-to-govern-and-manage body.

We feminists ought be vigilant of these mechanisms, asking ourselves constantly what kind of images and relations we are to reproduce. Thus, the task opened from and for social movements in general and feminism in particular has to do with the three questions we have raised in this article:

a) The need to reactivate a sense of politics that foregrounds the personal, the quotidian, bodies and sexualities, that puts life itself at its centre. The need to think and create spaces that make these political practices feasible and that take into account the task of generating real and powerful connectivities in ways that facilitate a coming together and allow the articulation of political hypotheses.

b) The need to think about the tools with which we provide ourselves for the generation of such connectivities; what their possibilities and limits are, what are the real practices and alliances that they allow. In this sense, to commit ourselves not to a politics that locates us either in an "outside" or an "inside" -immaculate, pure outside: institutional, neutral inside- but to a constant negotiation which allows us to push out in multiple directions.

c) And last, how to be able to effect real displacements and shifts in the very matrix of power. On the one hand, as we have noted, it is of crucial importance to address the issue of normalization or standardization upon which capital is nourished, visibilizing the new borders of exclusion and marginality. We need a political imagination beyond normalization, capable of articulating speech not from an alien "outside." On the other hand we must conceive ourselves as situated, colonized, power-saturated subjects able to provoke real break-downs and destabilizations from there. In this sense we know that such break-downs, with their emphasis on the body and the quotidian at the centre cannot depend upon individual, isolated choices; they require a collective practice. The point for us is how to generate real collective agency inscribed in daily practices which do not suppress differences but are able to deconstruct and dislocate processes of normalization. How to build up a discourse that, from a sense of partiality, of the local and the fragmentary, can account for the multiple connections of the new global network.

These are the major questions that we asking lately. For the moment we keep insisting: lets make of our bodies, our sexuality, our desires, our emotions a global disorder!

world of ideas, it must be articulated in movement. Political action is configured as a laboratory of theory-practice. A laboratory where failure, defeat, are always an opportunity for improvement and astuteness.

When we name our bodies as political bodies, agent bodies, bodies pierced by power and producers of it, denied bodies, exploited, torn apart, technological bodies that ring the alarms of the border security lines, airports, ministries, supermarkets; bodies full of a complexity too big for the tiny sizes of the anorexic normalization of global capitalism; imperfect bodies, polluted, full of misery, subjection and contradiction, lacking of all politeness and ready to be rude and rebel. When we name our bodies as bodies full of oppositional and transforming potency, we are assuming the responsibility of not turning into a simulacrum, accepting the challenge so clearly raised in the words of another Pink operator:

“Why not burst into that public space as real obscene furies showing the parody of what we are? The challenge of collectivity and connectively turning into an ungovernable incarnation, empowered for restless negotiation, plucking the plugs out of their sockets and deflecting them to wherever we choose, articulating a new concept of negotiation that casts aside masculinist images of battle and victory-or-death where no space is left for learning, cunning or being more clever the second, third, nth time, but only for absolute annihilation. An articulation of negotiation that makes it anything but harmless. Imagining social contestation in the simple terms of a confrontation infested with dichotomies us/them, victory/defeat, inside/outside, cause/effect -is not possible anymore; instead we should imagine it as a fierce discussion of multiple voices, although on occasions it is possible for some of these voices to sing the same chord.”

This leaves us in a difficult and slippery ground where our very identity can be kidnapped and turned into something unrecognizable, ejecting us out onto even more dangerous and difficult landscapes. Such are the threats of normalization when the struggle is to explode the very figures of normality and must arise from its fissures. When our bodies become a mere consumer object-subject, when they are expropriated from us and eviscerated of all their power and complexity to be projected like another cathode-ray phantom on the family screen; what we get back is not much more than an alienated and lobotomized image that turns us into something thrown at the back of that image, to the realm of the intolerable. A body whose difference, whose sensibilities and whose possibility of breaking the normalized is turned into an ornament in a shelf, into a neutralized, polished and disinfected consumer object, cleared of all its complexity to make it fit into the narrow shelves of the supermarket, is a body whose capacity for subversion and rebellion has

neutral at all, but rather the product of decisions and policies, struggles and demands, an accumulation of history and an incarnation of power. It forms us and transforms us; we are molded by the spaces through which we move, which structure our daily life, which determine whom we encounter and in what terms. Thus the space we live in is something intimate which constitutes our subjectivities at the same time that urban space -the streets, the squares- are “the public” *par excellence*, precisely that which is recognized as political.

To make explicit this unity, this non-differentiation, between “the public” and “the personal” and to insist that it is in this complex environment that “politics” is done, is, like so many feminist struggles, a matter of making visible the invisible, of denaturalizing what passes for “natural,” just as is revealing the hidden economy of domestic work or the concealed anguish of sexual violence. To speak about space as a feminist is a question of valuing and politicizing the quotidian; recognizing that that which each one of us experiences -instability, violence, little annoyances, isolation- is that from which the productive and reproductive order is created, and also that from which resistance arises. Creating our own spaces is a matter of insisting that citizenship is a daily practice collectively built through the active and conscientious habitation of space. Thus when we speak of a feminist space, we speak of a space in which the quotidian is recognized and approached as political, and where the political shows itself to be a daily matter: brought down from the heights, from the abstraction and the alienation, and occupied as a living space. Politicizing daily life -relationships, work, neighborhoods- requires a space from which to develop knowledge collectively, from which to reflect and think, from which to organize and experiment with new forms, new interventions. Living life as political is a potent challenge, taking up the spirit of so many feminist, anti-racist and anti-homophobic struggles which have insisted in NOT accepting violence, exclusion or annoyances as “normal.” If these struggles have achieved important changes in society it is thanks to many years of fighting and wagering on the collective. But lets not fool ourselves; much remains to be done, it is not time to rest on our laurels.

We find ourselves facing innumerable problems, among them employment which is less and less secure, life which is more and more expensive, the privatization of social services and of public spaces. Well we know that women suffer disproportionately the effects of these ills, overburdened with multiple part-time employment and the domestic and caretaking tasks which, after decades of feminist struggle, are still almost exclusively women’s turf. Women, precarious people and immigrants bear the weight of each social cut-back. Housing, thanks to wide-spread

speculation, is expensive. Employment is scarce and precarious and requires special training which is also expensive. Health care is minimal and its purveyors are overwhelmed. There are barely any daycare services much less services for the elderly. And for those who have time for such things, leisure activity is limited, for lack of public spaces, to consumerism, which is also expensive not to mention boring and condescending. Institutions and advertising invite us to think of this whole situation as a series of problems for each individual to manage as she can.

This is not so. We must insist again: in this daily life resides the political. But that it may be recognized as such, that we may build bridges and break our isolation, that this may be conceived as the practice of citizenship, there must be spaces for us to meet each other, see each other, recognize each other. They must be public spaces open to all from which to continue the thrilling labor of forming bonds and relations between different people. They must be common spaces because the social fabric is woven upon the loom of what is shared. And the better equipped these spaces are, the less their users will be obliged to battle the walls which fall down around them.

The Eskalera Karakola has maintained itself as such a space since November 1996, but in a situation of physical insecurity which irremediably limits our inventive capacities. Now we are proposing a project to demand the expropriation, re-habilitate and the cession to the collective Eskalera karakola. That, would augment the functions and possibilities of a social space continually in construction. It is a bid to equip more infrastructures and thus to create an ever wider community which uses and maintains them. An auditorium, a library, a computer center: besides being urgent necessities in this neighborhood, these are also things which in diverse ways create community through their use.

And why do we insist that there be a space only for women? One response is that it brings us joy, strength and inspiration to be, create, speak among ourselves: we are comfortable, which is important in an often unfriendly world. But that's not the whole story. We are also restless, agitated, upset. We fight our bid for collectivity, its difficulties and its limits. We stretch ourselves, mobilizing and pushing ourselves, daring ourselves to share our concerns and express our desires. We are many, different, each one with her story; the alliance is neither natural nor *a priori* but rather a continuous process of recognition and communication into which we launch ourselves again and again, committed to a strategy of uniting ourselves. To maintain a space where women can cultivate this kind of alliance is necessary because the general lack of meeting spaces is especially acute in the case of women, who either because we are

possibility that our well-meant analyses hide from us that the alliances cannot be established towards any of the versions of what we've called institutional condensation, in a voluntary way from one of the sides that would become the dependent and assisted part, but that all the actors have to recognize the principles of the alliance-through-difference if they want to avoid the reproduction of the domination relationships we want to transform. Besides experimenting with the building of a connectivity field where differences not only coexist, but contaminate and empower each other as transformational agents, in the Eskalera Karakola we wonder daily how to maintain our transforming power as non-normalized bodies, being inserted as we are within the wide and perverse movable nets of influence. That is, how can we maintain performativity as something more than mere theatre and acting? How can we avoid being devoured by the over saturated black hole where the relational hubs of the governmental, the consumer, and the spectacular, cross and are spit out a mere hologram, lacking of the depth of what we once were, marketed as a souvenir? One of the participants of the Operation Pink pointed out: "Pink cannot be a color, I also don't want it to mean more or less diffuse words such as 'difference' or... I don't know...I get tired with meta-linguistics. Pink should articulate a more elaborate discourse about daily wars. Pink as a connectivity field: and this is not dykes here talking about their things, the no-global there talking about whatever, whores there and precarious women, whatever... and Pink as a symbol of that which is despised because its weak, because its funny, because it's a sideshow, etc.. It has to become a dangerous weapon which establishes powerful connections between questions such as sexualities-exploitations-consumer rules and size 36 -the dispositions of flexible reproduction and so on and so forth."

And another one affirmed:

"I still don't know how to say no to war with our own bodies, when I think our own bodies have been built from a saturation of identities, desires and powers of war. Why don't we think, parting from that, how to evolve into cyborgs, how to constitute ourselves into real war machines? I still don't understand how it is so easy to repossess our own lives and walk around public and private spaces, go out the streets, take back territories, misadjust them, short-circuit them, etc., just because we are carrying a pink paintbrush in our hands."

Which is like saying "only because we are capable of naming it." The analysis, the investigation, must be tensed and tested by its practical articulation. Being able to imagine feminism as an ideal space of negotiated coexistence doesn't mean we are going to be able to build this space. The transformation of our life conditions cannot remain in the

age, in a certain ethnic group... in a certain space and time.

This is how we occupy and inhabit the Eskalera Karakola. Squatting as re-appropriation of physical space but also as re-appropriation of our own life-time, our own desires and emotions, our own bodies. The coherence and survival of a project like this requires us to formulate and build a feminist space as a field of connectivity which allows us to get down to the complex plot of socio-economic, ideological, cultural, and psychic hubs of domination which arise from dynamics of alienation, coercion, exploitation, prohibition and invisibility, act upon ours conforming our bodies and the space of constant transformation in which they act and are acted upon. If we all effect and are effected by practices and relationships in which we develop, if this is the only possible inside of. An effective political practice would try to negotiate the kind of practices we are going to allow with other actors. We claim this capacity of negotiation of our lives as one of the main prerogatives of the conformation -always collective- of the political subject.

We must get down to negotiation with potency and responsibility, which means, again, situating ourselves and mapping efficiently the territory -local-global, symbolic-material- where we play (ourselves). To equip ourselves with means for this negotiation, to be able to establish powerful alliances which allow us to redirect these relationships and practices towards a different place from that of domination and imposition, will depend above all on the cartographic tools with which we choose to equip ourselves.

For decades now the voices of innumerable women, most of them women of the third world and women of color from the Anglo-Saxon world, remind us that the possibilities of alliance-through-difference is an indispensable requirement for the conformation of feminism in an space of powerful connectivity.

This task is by no means evident, as one of the participants in Operation Pink expressed:

"I know which rhetorical figures I am willing to assume, but I am not that sure if some men, who, for instance, I have seen in marches dressed in pink, are willing to do it, unless those of straight lesbian-lover man and I don't think we are ready to fit them in the queer catalogue, I won't accept an octopus as a pet."

And several days later:

"How can we articulate this cyborg-queer alliance against the sadian subject, for example? What alliances are possible with those women who want to still be goddesses and not cyborgs? What will they want with us? Will they want any? What about us/them men? What we are risking here is the limits of a difference which kills my difference, the

between several precarious jobs or because we are confined to our houses and domestic tasks, because we feel threatened in the street or because we are marginalized within political organizations, have fewer opportunities to create the networks of support and solidarity which we need. It permits us a space from which to think through the multiple singularities of our lives, to create strategies and tools to politicize them, to explore new ways to express ourselves and relate to each other. A space for women is a deliberate space, a space which, because it situates itself outside the "normal," may function as a laboratory of social, political and artistic relationships.

In order that this space may maintain its function as a laboratory it must continue to be self-managed. This is not a social service center; there already are some of those, if not enough. Nor is it a cultural center in the strict sense. It is rather a necessary space in which each may express her fantasy and realize her project, creating political potency in the confluence of projects which this space houses.

Many projects of investigation and feminist study meet in the Eskalera Karakola. The house's unique position as a self-managed feminist space makes it an important convergence point between the feminist movement and feminist thought, which in other environments are often divorced from each other by institutional policies which habitually separate the "active" from the "reflective." The breadth and flexibility which self-management permits has also permitted stunningly diverse projects to arise out of the Karakola, and has permitted the cultivation of far-flung networks of feminist cooperation. The capacity to fit all these projects and concerns under one roof has produced a rich process of recombination and mutual feedback which transforms and strengthens all. This flux of knowledges, this collectivity of abilities determines the projects which arise from the Karakola and the political forms in which they take to the street.

This flow of knowledge and abilities also contributes to the management and maintenance of the house itself. In the six years which we have occupied the Karakola we have made innumerable reforms, big and small, of the roof and the rafters, the plumbing and the electricity. We learn among ourselves, each one bringing what she knows, collectivizing our abilities and knowledge and leaving the neighbors quite surprised: "Those girls!"

Our project is a bid for public and self-managed spaces in general and also a bid for this house in particular, for its history and its structure, and for this neighborhood of Lavapies with all the specific problems it faces at this historic moment. Lavapies, faces a process of "rehabilitation" which

denies the active participation of the residents and turns its back on the urgent necessities of the neighborhood's present inhabitants, opting instead for a transformation of the neighborhood which will imply expulsion and homogenization of its population. Innumerable urban investigations show that the homogenization of neighborhoods, that is, the reduction of diversity both of population and of use of space, impedes the formation of social density and leaves even more vulnerable all those who are not young, mobile, male heterosexual natives with steady employment. Women, precarious workers, migrants, handicapped people and elderly people prosper in environments in which we can all live, where all can cover our needs nearby and at decent prices, where there are sufficient social infrastructures like clinics, daycare centers and parks, where there are spaces for meeting and for organizing, where it might be possible to create a social fabric of mutual care and social cooperation and not of police control. We are talking about spaces in which an active, participative citizenship might be constructed.

Too many policies attempt to resolve the social needs of women through endowments for the family. These endowments are important and would that there be more of them, but in no way do they resolve the need which women have for our own spaces of encounter, creation and political and social organization. Not all women are mothers and all women are much more than mothers. The problems of family management are just some of the many which we face. The generalized flight of women from the traditional family and from reproduction makes ever more absurd this kind of attempt to speak of the necessities of women as if they were identical to those of reproduction in the bosom of the family. This practice constitutes an effort to deny and invisibilise the tremendous diversity among women, we who are young and old, who are singles, lesbians, transsexuals, migrants, students, precarious workers and so much more. From this diversity, which is not merely a display of pretty colors but a convergence of intimate experiences, a complex and uncontrollable multitude, a yet imminent alliance, we throw down this challenge to whomever would invisibilise or pathologise us: here we are. We will make spaces for ourselves.

TERRITORIES.

1. IN URBAN SPACE:

The processes which configure the space where we move, the space we inhabit, are processes saturated with power relationships. Urban space is configured through multiple transformations and political, social and economic negotiations. Urban space, then, is a non-neutral territory. In this territory the stamp of the global capitalist order is

space for real transformation since often proximity, concealing the complex plot existing outside our approach, allows us to only articulate a reactive politics of refusal and denial of one or several of these institutional condensations, or else a confusing and undetermined amalgam of them, which pretends to find an uncontaminated "outside" as a way of escaping those relational flows, -or a normalizing politic in search of an inside of some of these manifestations of crystallisation in which be able to fit as an assimilated element.

These approaches diminish our vision and reduce our range, making, in both cases, from the place of condensation an undifferentiated absolute of the very plot of influences in which it shows. In the case of refusal-as-denial the condensed manifestation of practices is mistaken both with the origin and the cause of themselves, and it is this sliding that allows the imagination an "outside" when it puts in the same level the "outside" of the institution and the 'outside' power relations. In the case of refusal-as-insertion, they are conceived as possible only in an axis of verticality instead of as a multiform net in which diverse actors mutually able to be influenced according to the magnitude of their capacity, understanding capacity here as possibility and will. Conceiving, in other ways, the political transformation articulated in the refusal-as-reversion allows us to take into account not only flows and relations but also the places of their crystallisation. It allows us to recognize ourselves as saturated and pierced bodies without dismissing the possibility of their emancipation, without robbing us of the capacity to place ourselves critically and deconstructively within these relations. Reversion is an effective type of subversion, a practice which allows us to deviate the course, using our own bodies to de-contextualize them, getting them to signify in a new and change(d/ing) context, deconstructing them, linking them or breaking them, dyeing them with our own filters.

For us, this is a bid to make a political project of each life, a project of transformation of relationships that can only be carried out within a collective. With all its limits and its clumsiness, this is a bid for social centers in general and the Karakola in particular: a women's project arising from the need to experience ourselves, to relate and to invent ourselves, to communicate and break the mechanisms of production of a heterosexual normalizing state, and of rigid marking of the imposed gender roles. A women's collective that tries to constantly question the world and ourselves from a feminist stance, which means to confront the world from an analysis crossed by a complexity of structures, the very ones that comprise us, never innocent and always complex, the very ones that strain us and call us to understand ourselves as rooted in a certain sex-gender-desire system, in a certain socioeconomic class, in a certain

of Gender: for this year's pride parade they planned a deconstruction of national ID cards, paying attention to other differences, not only sexual, but also in country of origin, race, ethnicity -crucial questions in the configuration of identities. In these documents, everything was changed in such a way that they showed the subjectivity of such categories and their political and social construction.

This is a small sketch of the terrains of the Karakola. These questions, the precarization of existence, the global war and the deconstruction of the sex/gender/desire system, are questions that constantly converge, join and support each other. They articulate common discursive practices. Other questions such as violence against women appear constantly in our daily work, our thinking and our interventions.

MAKING PROBLEMATIC

How can we think, then, how can we shape the feminist political contribution as a long-term proposal capable of generating, strengthening and channeling energies able to put a strain on the enclosures? How can we craft feminism as a powerful mechanism that pushes and forces the boundaries which tie and restrict us, with the aim of making room around us for broader relations and spaces of freedom? This is a main concern for the Eskalera Karakola.

Since we understand power not as a site but as a series of symbolic and material practices and relationships, we believe our own conception of "the personal is political" must include "the quotidian is political." The feminist gamble, thus, must be one that brings politics into daily life as well as daily life into politics. It has to take into account flows and daily power relationships and get involved in their transformations. To conceive the places of institutional condensation of these relationships as absolute actors, as causes rather than as crystallizations engraved in the circuits where flows of power pass, can only confuse our analysis and disorientate our practices.

Of course these places of institutional condensation vary greatly in magnitude and in strength, from governmental institutions, supra-governmental, transnational and non-governmental organizations, to trade unions, neighbors' associations, the academy, cultural and other pressure groups and social collectives... but what is important is our process of cartography placing them in the same multi-relational sphere more than in a hierarchical system of one or two directions. This way, the object of political transformation is the wider field of power relationships which participate in these crystallizations. When, on the other hand, one of them is placed throughout the whole political horizon, there is little

inscribed, but it is from here, also, from these micro-spaces (from the cities, from the suburbs, from the social centers, from the Karakola), where people constantly battle and renegotiate the configuration of territories. Different desires, different necessities or concerns, political practice, victories and defeats configure the terrain through which we move. That is why the streets we walk around, the town squares we fill, the market, the pavement, the trees, the houses we live in, are the result of certain politics, of the replies or acceptance they get, of private interests or neighborhood and social struggle, of new techniques of capitalist accumulation (for example, the real estate market), and of techniques of contestation and recovery of urban space (for instance, social centers).

The Karakola inserts itself in this complex map, and far from declaring itself outside this frame of power relationships, it extends a constant invitation to think ourselves and situate ourselves as political subjects capable of decision and action within our environment and within our own lives. This territory emerges then as the urban space where we recognize ourselves, where we place ourselves, a physical and symbolic space we re-assign ourselves. This space is located in the center of Madrid, in the neighborhood of Lavapiés. The borough is unique due to its social, urban and economic characteristics. Its population comes in large part from different countries such as Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Nigeria, Senegal, Pakistan, India, China, Ecuador, Peru, Mexico, etc. This social composition is in part new and in part established: among the Moroccans there are two and even three generations here. Lavapiés has historically been a working-class area, poor, but with a great folkloric tradition which is starting to give way to multi-ethnic cohabitation. It is a privileged enclave because of its social composition and because of its tradition of neighborhood organizing and social movements in general (social centers, squatted houses, support networks, solidarity shops, fair commerce, self-employment cooperatives, women's groups, distributors, media projects such as *Madrid Wireless*, *Tele Pies*, or *Deyavi*, and a diversity of other powerful initiatives). On the other hand, it is one of the poorest areas of Madrid, marked by exclusion, precariousness, marginality, lack of social resources, infrastructure, equipment, green areas, meeting points, pavement for pedestrians, car parks, schools, nurseries, clinics. We can say Lavapiés is an area lacking in all kinds of social resources and urban plans related to the necessities and the desires of its inhabitants. This is not unintentional. It forms part of a chain of policies which consistently attend to individual and private property interests above social and public interests.

Lavapiés is a privileged area for real estate speculation. Its

current re-building and the commercialisation of a young, bohemian, alternative, different, multicultural imaginary, are weapons capitalism is beginning to use to sell the area as one of the hippest and most in-demand in Madrid. Thus we confront an urban rebuilding process directed to young and wealthy people, and a process of (impossible) segregation of the poorest, oldest, migrant, illegal and otherwise marginal people. A lot of residents with old rents are barred from their own houses by real estate companies that sell their apartments at inaccessible prices. Conditions for those who are able to stay, are equally hair-raising: twelve square meter flats with no bathroom inside; whole buildings supported by props and in constant danger of collapse; humid flats with no smoke outlet or ventilation. All these apartments were the ones that, with the 1997 Lavapiés Plan of Restoration, began to be recognized as sub-standard housing. The Plan promised to eliminate these houses and relocate their inhabitants. To date, none of the sub-standard housing has been eliminated nor has any resident be relocated. The inhabitants cannot pay the restorations imposed upon them and the houses meant to relocate them stand empty. None of the equipment promised for the area has been built (not even the much-desired and long-promised clinic).

This is the territory in which the Karakola inscribes itself. To us, the lack of public spaces where women can meet, the lack of decent homes, the savage speculation, are points from which the urbanistic side of our project can be understood. This is why we are bidding for the expropriation of buildings such as the Karakola, abandoned for decades. Our bid is about valuing use above profit, about questioning the policies of an administration which protects private property at any social cost. Expropriation is a juridical tool which the administration has in its hands, to be used when the duty of preservation is not fulfilled by land-owners. The persistent non-use of this tool demonstrates the links between private and speculative interests, which only survive thanks to protectionist policies. This leaves us in the position of arguing that the law be applied properly: if it were the Karakola would have been expropriated and made a public good years ago.

We also want to remark upon the necessity of creating public spaces for women where we can experiment, participate, decide, act, from relation which is not one of assistance or charity. The present conformation of the urban terrain totally denies this desire, banishes it before it may even arise, so we have not only an urban space hostile to women, but are inhibited from any kind of creative initiative proposing other ways to inhabit the city from our own point of view, with autonomy and as valid political interlocutors.

But none of these configurations of power is definitive. Other

weapon to open before the sexist and homophobic chants. We made up watchwords, we talked about differences, we placed our irreducible bodies in the center, we talked about a creative, active, public politics. About citizen participation and the crisis of representation. We went around the streets dressed in pink to shout: *las calles de rosa son otra cosa*, to put an end to dualistic systems, to speak about sexuality, about our subversive bodies, to display the para-war against military logic, to take back the living spaces that have been sold away from us: the pink way, we said, walks freely around our cities, recognizes no borders and asks to be appropriated. It gets out of the imposed normalized circuits and places itself directly above the bodies that struggle to make other logics real.

3/ About differences and their visibility: the question of visibility of other sexualities.

This has been crucial for us: on one hand to understand the social order as an order ruled by the empire of the heterosexual, which has been essential in sustaining the logic of capitalism. An ahistoric, immobile notion of sexuality that rigidly maintains gender roles. But also and furthermore, to understand gender as a social and political construction and sex as a powerful technology through which social relationships are normalized, bonds are sowed, bodies made and institutionalized, and borders drawn. To think then about the space of subjection as the line which normalises and establishes sex/gender and desire. The proliferation of other sexualities demands the denaturalisation and shifting of the sex/gender/desire system. Nevertheless, we are witnessing a process through which the proliferation of gay and lesbian sexualities is constantly being absorbed and recaptured by capitalism. Desire becomes a product that capitalism redesigns in the most attractive way, demonstrating once again its stunning capacity to reappropriate and reestablish its normalizing discourse in the daily practices of life by drawing new and more complex boundaries of exclusion. To us, breaking with the normalizing discourse, with the claims of "equality," with the creation of stereotypes and the growing gay market, to make the sexualities that are "out" visible, are prime questions in making a political criticism of the hetero-patriarchal order. Proposals such as "*bollo no es una marca, es un desorden global*" ("dyke is not a brand name; it's a global disorder") went in that direction. On the one hand, we insist on the denaturalisation of sex (including both heterosexual and homosexual identities), and on the other insist that our sexuality is irreducible to capitalism. It is always excessive, an excess that opens and makes possible the constant subversions and resistances against capitalism. We also look to proposals such as that which arose from the group Rhetorics

are the drifts that have been done this year and that depart from the idea that differentiation between subject and object of study is impossible. Recognizing this, the perspective of the project is one of partial analysis, located, fragmented, but not because of that less real. The question raised here is the possibility of doing common re-writings, seeking relationship nodes, points of inflection and common names which allow us to draw a more or less clear map, and the possibility of articulating a potent rebellious political discourse.

2/ Understanding and intervening in permanent global war and the quotidian war which surrounds us.

The new world order begun after September 11th and the Genoa events has established a logic of war that reduces the world to two sides -terrorists and non-terrorists, violent people and non-violent people- and these have become structures for the legitimization of the imposed order and for the criminalizing of social movements. To break these dichotomies, to seek new means of expression that will really allow us to subvert these simplifying and oppressive models, in short, to insist upon another perspective capable of confusing these simple categories and rupturing the duality of this war empire. Mobilisations against the invasion of Iraq were full of fascinating efforts to break with this discourse. For us the question was how to place ourselves within the demonstrations: to be part of the spontaneity and the flow in the streets during those days while at the same time placing ourselves in a non-neutral way, expressing our concern about the sexist and homophobic chants and slogans, placing our bodies as complex marks impossible to subject to the simplifying, divisional and criminalizing violent/non violent discourse, while at the same time expressing the need to broaden the discourse against the war. The war, we said, does not start nor end in Iraq. Women's bodies are used as battlefields in war; but they are also where the weight of the hidden economy is borne, whether a country is in war or not. Poverty produces wars: global war also has to do with the hetero-patriarchal order. Global war, we said, is also the daily war we suffer, fight against and negotiate daily. These processes cannot be separated from the social and immediate reality of our existence, from the militarization of our life with mortifying discourses of control and legality, from the precarization of existence, the interruption of human rights, exploitation, marginality, misery.

With these questions in mind, we created a mechanism that went beyond the Karakola, and a great diversity of people joined us: Operation Pink and its weapon of choice, the para-war, a pink umbrella with which to make fun of police repression, take it out of context and ridicule it and thereby to fight the criminalizing of social movements. But it was also a

ways of relating and the praxis of resistance are plotted within its bosom. Territories are reorganized and power structures are questioned. The Karakola is an operation to confront the hetero-patriarchal order and the greedy process of global capitalism, creating a space where other kinds of politics can take shape.

2. TERRITORIES OF CITIZENSHIP

Going from a map to a territory has to do with the physical and symbolic re-appropriation of the space we inhabit. Because when we stop thinking about our environment as neutral and understand it as a space saturated with power relationships in which we participate and in which we move around, the map blurs and our capacity to draw the lines again, to deconstruct the limits, to mark the terrains that can be real settings for political action is born again.

Women have historically been excluded from political activities. The myth of eternal devotion to private or domestic space disappears, nevertheless, if we keep insisting that "the personal is political." Our environment, our way of inhabiting, our daily life, cannot be understood without taking into account the power relationships which configure them.

The dichotomy between public and private then becomes meaningless; there is no foreign land of the social on one hand, and a private setting that would keep or lives and our bodies isolated on the other. Thus we can reorient and relocate ourselves, land ourselves and put the body in the center. A body in which inside and outside cannot be distinguished, in which the marks of public and private use are blurred, and in which the incapacity to understand each other outside of the political framework invites us to a make a vital gamble for the constant and creative politization of our lives.

To us, squatting has to do with all these things: that the personal is political also means that power is inscribed within the most mundane of daily actions. It becomes a body, forms desire and saturates pleasure. Squatting is a bid to stop understanding politics as something apart from life. To make daily life, the smallest thing, a constant re-invention, a constant problematization, a constant daily creation which breaks with old conceptions of traditional politics. In this sense self-management is essential, a point upon which we will accept no compromise. Self-management is to make this political bid real through constant experimentation, and above all, from an active and collective participation. The Karakola is an invitation to break with the relationships of passivity and patronage created and sustained by assistential institutions. It is an invitation to put into action the creative capacity of the collective, to invent real cooperation that often has inspired us to generate real political tools.

From here, from “the personal is political,” from the insertion of a new conception of the political in daily life, from self-management and the collective, from this position we insist on a new way of “doing city.” Political processes are not unfamiliar to us; for this reason, we search for ways to promote participation in them, capacity of decision, of action, of transformation, in what we could call the formation of an active, public and participative citizenship. This is not something we can take for granted, especially as women who have seen the possibility of making decisions about our lives, our environment, our city, our world always restricted. This is then a question of generating collective links that can transmit, fluctuate, create new techniques of intervention and construction arising from ourselves, techniques that can really conform the city and the world we want and desire. Because we are part of this terrain we decide and fight daily to construct and organize it. Plastic designs of the world we want. Brutal expansions of constricted designs. Legitimate re-appropriation of our living space, of our bodies, of our boroughs, of our world.

3. TERRITORIES FROM THE KARAKOLA

To speak about territories is then to situate ourselves. And to situate ourselves means to reveal the intertwined relationships which configure us and which we configure, it is to deepen in the necessity of understanding each other not as stable subjects (not from the essentialist perspective of being women), but as a constant process that can more or less be located in spite of the complexity of the social composition and the new world order. Situating ourselves, understanding each other from a partial position but not an indefinable nor an insufficient one, thousands of questions are raised and we consider it is important to face them. Some of the interests we raise from the Karakola are:

1/ Investigation, analysis and reflection upon the processes of transformation of work.

We depart from the hypothesis that while work was once centered in the Fordist factory and assembly line production, this model has changed into a growing intensification of the productive process that on one hand has exceeded the old factory to reach the most unexpected corners of life in all its dimensions and, on the other hand, has meant the end of work as we knew it and the birth of a series of multi-formed activities denominated “precarious.” For us it is important to emphasize the impossibility of separating such analysis from the question of the feminisation of labor. This has to do with the transformation of power that goes from the social to the most intimate and vice versa (the

characteristic of this power is in its production and in its reproduction, it is not a one-directional power: it's circular, with no defined origin) which places the body as a privileged enclave from whence to read and where political practices are inscribed, such as expropriation by capitalism for its central production of qualities historically defined as “feminine.”

Questions such as care in general terms, affective capacity, relationship components, instability, invisibility and vulnerability, have become not only the support, but also the requirement and a key in the new systems of production inaugurated global capitalism. To transit through this question of the feminisation of labor means to think that this model of work is not new but an extension of the typically feminine work that women have been doing within the “private sphere.” Thus we do not define precariousness as a new model of work but -being totally intertwined with life and indistinguishable from it- we'd rather talk about the precarisation of existence. Precarisation of existence and feminisation of labor are then the key points of departure in order to begin to understand the new political and social scenery and to be able to articulate general hypotheses and thereby to invent new acts of subversion and destabilisation of the imposed order.

As part of the restless intelligence we consider fundamental to be able to fight today's social complex, two projects have come out in the Karakola: Sex, Lies and Precariousness explores the new circuits of work, taking as a hub the textile multinational Inditex, in the production innovations of which exploitation of women's work is key. Moreover, subjects such as women's representation or body normalization become real mechanisms in the production of bodies and of the feminine body: how does a Zara shop assistant change her uniform when she takes it home? Where are the boundaries between work/not work? What is produced is bodies: normalized, regularized, controlled ways of life, and here the body of a woman has a lot to say. Sex, Lies and Precariousness culminated in an action in a Zara shop where more or less one hundred women took over the shop to denounce labor exploitation, precarious contracts, the normalized and standardized size of clothes which promote anorexic ideals and reproduce stereotypes of what a woman should be: again and again the same models of subjection to the hetero-patriarchal order.

On the other hand, Precarias a la Deriva, (Precarious Women Adrift) is a project which started from one proposal: to drift through the circuits of work, physical and symbolic, in different sectors: the work of women innkeepers, workers in immaterial work (translators, teachers, copy editors), women phone operators, women nurses, women audiovisual workers (radio and television) and women sex workers. These