Ways of Working
Iris Dressler, Daniel G. Andújar

Iris Dressler: In one of our recent conversations, you described how the machinery of the bigger art institutions alienates the artists from their work to a certain extent. You put it more or less in the following way: the artist, arriving at the museum to install his or her works, is sent to luxury hotels, restaurants and bars, while an armada of professionals—technicians, restorers, architects, designers, coordinators, assistants and so forth—care for the 'proper' presentation and communication of his of her work, following the standards of the respective institution. This is not to mention that at this moment the curator and the PR and education departments have long since defined—again in line with the conventions of the respective house—the ways of mediating the artist's works. The artist, finally arriving at the 'ready-to-go' exhibition, might be shocked, as he or she no longer recognises his or her work the way it is embodied in and absorbed by the corporate setting. But it is too late: the press, board, VIPs and the like are already standing by. These attitudes and workflows of the institutional machinery are of course not a new phenomenon if you just remember the cartoon-like diagram *Average Day at the Museum* by the MoMA from the 1940s. But it seems that until now museums in particular have been largely ignoring over 40 years of ongoing and quite diverse practices as well as discourses of institutional critique. They instead basically submit themselves far too voluntarily to almost phantasmal political pressures regarding the museum's city marketing and tourist

impact, fixating on irrational growth in visitor numbers and pulling in lucrative and glamorous private corporations. In my view, these politically indoctrinated 'missions' of the museum (which go hand in hand with corporate demands) have nothing to do—as is often claimed—with the financial needs of museum maintenance. They are solely about putting the museum on a prestigious stage for business and politics. By this logic, the artist seems to be a sort of alien, a disruptive factor that needs to be sedated to fit in with the museum's rhetoric.

Daniel G. Andújar: Artistic practice, as I conceive it, must be transformed into a form of 'resistance' against a model obstinately aimed at prevailing in a space of relations that is becoming more and more confused, normalised, globalised, hierarchical, diffused, standardised and so on. Our society, economy and culture are founded upon interests, values, institutions, and systems of representation that, in general terms, limit creativity, confiscate and manipulate the artist's work and divert his energy toward sterile confrontation and discouragement.

The practice of art must reveal the configurations of power, establish mechanisms of relating socially that ensure its long-term impact and extend its discourse beyond the restricted confines of art lovers, occasional tourists and of the institution itself. Those who direct the framework of cultural industries and the management of cultural institutions abandoned, decades ago, the processes of creating new content and cultural production as a collective construction. Most of the professionals who run this framework are simply developing a personal power structure, climbing up the ladder to the most visible and media-friendly part of the public and private art institutions. They flaunt their power and reign over the reality of their little empire. The art institution has been absorbed as just another mechanism in the process of servicing production. It is an active part of the 'touristification' process in the urban context and participates in the complex re-adaptation of the new city's infrastructures. Artists have been pushed to the sidelines to make room for a new elite of cultural managers who work on biennial events in ivory towers conceived more like mausoleums.

The museum institution is undoubtedly facing a challenge with all its paradoxes and contradictions: existing as a physical space that promotes cultural initiatives

which are increasingly part of a more diffuse representation where systems of representation and dissemination pass through intangible networks that, in turn, inevitably require a physical container, a real space to produce and deliver from.

Things will become increasingly difficult in the permanent and most likely also in the temporary and hybrid zones where people can meet, talk, work, even celebrate and dissolve as social groups, move and/or form new groups. The contradiction of a cultural process necessarily faces a slow pace of technological development and social frenzy.

In Spain, for example, where most art institutions have been in operation for less than a decade, we are living a misconception, a professionalisation effect that transforms the practice of art into a professional area, a kind of factory, with little connection to the artist's procedures.

Because we have these 'professionals', our costs for production and installation are the most expensive in Europe, and we lack options for improvisation but have a very dangerous process of standardisation. Professionalisation here is a perilous process that transforms every employee in the museum into a true 'professional of the highest integrity and competence', excluding the artists from any decision about their own work.

The professionalisation process in museums tends to establish norms of conduct and qualifications for museum workers and also insists that they 'conform to the norms of the museum' and with the established procedures and code of conduct, enforced by the hierarchy, since 'accreditation assures conformity to general expectations of the institution.' And this is totally incompatible with any kind of artistic practice.

Clearly, this model implies a conflict of interests with artists, and this radicalisation of positions is used in a very opportune way by those in power and highly placed in these visible spaces. In the new configuration of cultural industries that employ more and more people, artists are found at the lowest level of this hierarchy and are at the tail end of the economic rewards.

As a matter of fact, there are a lot of people earning a living in this world, but it seems like artists are rather 'risking their lives'. And I ask myself, can the art system support itself without contemporary artists? It seems that many institutions can. Fortunately the practice of art is not only confined to the boundaries of the

institution or the marketplace; it can and must find new territories to develop new proposals, and if we can't find them, we have to invent them. Art, like any cultural process, is basically a process of transmission, transference, of a continuous, permanent and necessary dialogue. But we must not forget that it is also transgression, rupture, irony, parody, appropriation, misappropriation, confrontation, investigation, exploration, interrogation and opposition. Therefore we search for ideal contexts to allow this idea to develop in the best conditions. And if they don't exist, we have to try to create them.

> Since the mid-90s we have discussed, experienced and developed through many joint as well as individual projects and processes, critical, collaborative and independent ways of working. One aspect, speaking from the angle of the institution as a place of knowledge production, is how we can understand the institution not only as a place for education but as a learning structure, in the sense of sharing knowledge rather than only distributing it.

Social cooperation reveals its power to innovate and create, understood as the best way of supporting a model that permits distribution and expansion of content for participants, users and audiences. Art also has a political role requiring ethical positions; aesthetics are not enough. Those who follow exclusively commercial and institutional models and practices may deem all of this irrelevant, but they must learn to accept being anchored to traditional models that differ radically from those most likely to prevail. For me, artistic practice and the processes involved in generating knowledge are very closely entwined with processes of information transmission, as part of a single collective cultural process.

A tremendously complex world like the one we face that is at the same time profoundly interconnected requires complex procedures of collaboration and education in the collective concept. We need a change, and that change must begin with a redefinition of the artist's role in society, and even within his or her specific circumstances. I believe this process has to be communicated and shared, and as a result I do not understand the idea of an artistic practice whose formal aspects can be distinguished from supposedly educational ones.

The original concept must become a part of a single idea of a whole, where the workshop and the public exhibition are part of a single goal. The artist's working space is in turn a set of spaces, not necessarily physical or joined, where he or she works, investigates, celebrates, listens, visits, consults and exchanges, meets and/or argues as part of a complex system. A process prevails which breaks down the classic concept of artistic education, ushering in another concept which is processual, analytical, informative, critical and activist in a reality and a logic which respond to the situation we now live in—an open experience where we share, learn or contribute, where the idea of open social space and collective experience is possible, with a special emphasis on that horizontal idea of exchange, collaboration and de-hierarchised experience.

> Referring to your 'do-it-together' requirement (a reinterpretation of the Web 2.0 generation's promising slogan 'do-it-yourself') as well as to your broad activities in the context of free and open source software, to what extent do the new communication and information technologies offer and demand specific ways of working?

The 'do-it-yourself' slogan was the Ikea slogan adopted by many artists from the mid-90s on. But it was the wrong one.

As a part of this representational and conceptual development, part of my work uses a number of components that are more or less directly related to free software as a thematic field. The model and the ethical positions of the movement can inspire contemporary art to take new directions in relation to general problems in society. To me, free software's fundamental abolishment of intellectual property rights represents a chance to structurally and conceptually 're-programme' society for the better, something I used like a metaphor which is shared with much of contemporary art in my opinion.

Information and communication technology and the consequences of globalisation have unquestionably had a transforming influence, dismantling old ways of thinking and operating.

There can be no doubt that this represents a reformulation of the processes of the production, transmission and appropriation of symbolic goods, which forces

us to re-examine the models of constructing subjectivity and social organisation. We can see a clear break in the linear guidelines of experiencing time and space, as well as in concepts such as authorship or intellectual and industrial property. We are witnessing a re-examination of individual and collective identities, based on the new multicultural context and the context of diversity, resulting in a crisis in the classic systems of representation and the model of cultural reproduction associated with the nation-state.

We have seen a change in certain processes of collective working and learning, with the emergence of a kind of meritocratic hierarchy based on individual effort working for the collective good and person-to-person relations which are helping to create one of the greatest collective areas for exchange, innovation and creation ever seen in the history of humankind outside the sphere of the public institutions.

While management societies became intermediaries between creators and those in control of production, distribution and commercialisation, new technologies are gradually eliminating the need for these intermediaries and management services. The digital gap, generational clash and many other similar phenomena are challenging our traditional ways of working with, understanding and managing information—and they are also changing our view with regard to negotiating, trading, in short, to living in and understanding the world we inhabit. The tools and resources presented by new information and communication technologies are indissolubly linked to the processes of structural change and to the fundamental transformation taking place in our society. Furthermore, the ways we think, relate to one another, consume, produce and trade are undoubtedly being modified.

The models are continually being defined. Fortunately, current information and communication technologies have created a new framework for action, in which previous situations as well as new scenarios develop, and artists can also take advantage of this. I believe that these changes are creating a crisis in the dominant cultural models of distribution and management.

Regarding your various e-projects, I have the impression that especially those connected to the broad involvement of local communities are functioning very well. What have the various experiences with e-valencia, e-barcelona and e-sevilla been with regards to communities?

And recently there is e-madrid, which was very well received but also very complex because of its size and the make-up of Madrid's administration. These e-projects are platforms that approach and question society's capacity for self-regulation in contexts of discussion and critique when the mechanisms for social control and the regulations imposed by traditional means are de-activated.

This is a tool conceived for collective use and to be implanted locally. Its aim is to exert an influence in certain contexts through the force created by the collective involvement of numerous individual mechanisms, by people or by collectives that are dispersed yet have the capacity to operate, speculate and develop a level of collective knowledge. The Internet's digital space did not simply emerge as a means of enabling communication, as the public forum that it undoubtedly is. It also emerged as a new theatre for operations defined by social and power relationships.

Thus the e-projects were born in 2001, and a long list of platforms have been developed by or have emerged from social processes or practical workshops, seeking the social participation of collectives and local movements involved in critical processes concerning cultural policies and processes; generating new dynamics, breaking control mechanisms.

The forum responds to the growing instrumentalisation of public processes and is for open, transparent discussion. It gives a voice to that which is not a voice; it gives a voice to cutting criticism and expressive language. Some voices are more justified than others. Some have better manners than others. Some are more morally demanding than others. Such forums have more than what we usually hear or read in other media. They are always pushing the limits, because this is still an artistic project and not a social tool.

Your artistic practice connects art and knowledge production, and of course the sharing of knowledge, in a far-reaching sense—even if I think back to a project like the *Manfred and Wilhelm Beutel Photo Collection* from 1998 that was on show at the *Reservate der Sehnsucht* exhibition in the former Union Brewery in Dortmund. In inventing a locally focused photo collection, in manipulating images from the city of Dortmund, in constructing a real and at the same time fictitious narrative about Manfred and Wilhelm Beutel (both citizens of Dortmund)

and using a high-tech tool for falsifying, the project treated the history of Dortmund, especially those periods for which a certain common awareness was lacking, in quite a complex way. It was a project that addressed the memory of the local public to a great degree.

All of your art projects are based on collaborative research that explores different political, historical, social and cultural phenomena and their media representations in a critical way: body politics, corruption, censorship, xenophobia, urban developments, the cultural industries and the inclusion and exclusion of technologies to name just a few. Moreover you act as curator, conduct many workshops, write articles, are involved in protest activities (for example against the Valencia Biennial or the closing of the IVAM Centre del Carme), publish magazines and web forums, keep up the irational.org project and maintain its server and advise museums as well as initiatives. Since December 2008 you have been the vice president of the Visual Artists Association of Catalonia. In how you work, I see all these different roles related to each other, in the sense that you understand them as separate but connected territories of the collaborative production of art and knowledge and for reclaiming free spaces of action.

I do not distinguish between one activity and the other. Art also has a political function and needs to take a clear ethical stance. As I understand it, art cannot limit itself to simply airing great questions about the human and the divine, nor to obeying strategies which are purely aesthetic or marketplace driven; it must rather be committed to and involved in social and political processes.

I think that these are the kinds of territories where visual artists can show signs of commitment and set examples with their work; without them, their ability to act becomes very limited. Historically, their work has been associated with visions that are too egocentric and hyper-individualistic, focusing on the vision of the one-of-a-kind object as the sole material reference to their work. It is something that is transformed into mere exchange value in a market that is also evolving at the same time in its own economic context. As we mentioned earlier, we are caught up in a sweeping process of change which is creating attitudes that allow for the

management, on a global level, of different movements in favour of the development of new forms of innovating and creating collectively. These attitudes are also in favour of freely sharing the acquired knowledge and the right to use it. It is a complex global process of cooperation and development that is constantly expanding its interests and growing in participants. They are ways of organising work that have been declared more productive and which are tremendously able to direct these innovations towards the goal of communal interest. Social cooperation reveals its powers of innovation and creation, understood as the best way to support a model that allows for the distribution and expansion of the contents for the participants, the users and the audience. Obviously, artists must belong to the process of change, and it will not be easy to adapt.

We have to demonstrate our ethical commitment with the work we do, incorporating it into the part of the process that develops the various aspects that constitute our social, political and cultural context. We are living through a re-formulation of the processes of the production, transmission and appropriation of symbolic goods that makes us reconsider the models for constructing subjectivity and social organisation.

Walter Benjamin had already written about producers in 1934: "A writer who does not teach other writers teaches nobody. The crucial point, therefore, is that a writer's production must have the character of a model: it must be able to instruct other writers in their production and, secondly, it must be able to place an improved apparatus at their disposal. This apparatus will be all the better, the more consumers it brings into contact with the production process—in short, the more readers or spectators it turns into collaborators."

We must begin redefining the role of the artist in this society, even within its specificity, and there is nothing wrong with that—or is this the only field that cannot have a crisis or be in a state of constant change? Aren't professionals in other disciplines—educators, journalists, scientists—trying to redefine or rethink their role in society, to gradually adapt to change, to find their place in society? A process must be started to break with the classic conception of the artist in order to create a different one which should be processual in nature, akin to the character of an analyst, informer or critic, within a reality of logical answers to the current situation of the exclusionist, bourgeois art institution—the museum, the market, the academic

world, the conservative concept of the artist. Artists must offer alternative actions, open spaces of confrontation and criticism.

This implies going into the arena, questioning the structure as a whole and convincing others that we can restructure the entire system using different parameters, processes other than the ones proposed by the current court artists, official portraitists, roundabout artists and decorators in cahoots with the powers that be. We cannot resign ourselves to turning back to the cathedral, painting vaulted ceilings in theatres and decorating the apartments of the construction business's nouveau riche. Obviously we're pushing the issue one step further, reformulating a thorough rereading, but I don't believe that we are doing anything more than observing what is going on around us and questioning it, questioning it all the time, learning to read the reverse of images. It is nothing new.

In 1996 you created Technologies To The People® (TTTP) as a vehicle—in the form of a licensed corporation—for reflecting the promises and cynicism towards but also the potential of new technologies in an ironic and at the same time critical way. For a long time TTTP served as a sort of stage and masquerade (I wouldn't say 'fake') that you used to enact double-blind and ambiguous situations: through the TTTP *Video Collection* in 1997, for example, an online project that pretended to provide download access to a hundred videos from the foremost artists. Whoever tried to download a video went through a never-ending series of error prompts instructing the user to update their browser software, get a faster Internet connection, add memory, install plug-ins and so forth. Finally you received hundreds of angry emails, full of complaints that, for example, the project required overly sophisticated technology and in doing so excluded most of the users. Some enraged artists claimed their copyrights; other people were interested in getting the software—but none of them ever experienced the promised service, since there was of course nothing to download. Basically the project reflected a certain naiveté with respect to the seeming omnipotence and accessibility of new technologies.

I also remember quite well that the TTTP *Street Access Machine* from 1996, which only existed in an advertising campaign, supposedly gave homeless people access to plastic cash. Apple contacted you, because they were interested in producing the machine. You of course declined, since at that time TTTP—at least as I understand it—was basically a tool or environment for generating gossip and misunderstandings, including with regard to the role of the artist. What function does TTTP serve, or better, how would you describe it today?

Technologies To The People came about as a project precisely with the *Street Access Machine* for the "Discord. Sabotage of Realities" exhibition that took place at the Kunstverein and the Kunsthaus in Hamburg in 1996. It was the moment when the Internet was being introduced into the domestic sphere and just when the technology bubble was beginning to take shape. It aimed to stress the fact that this new utopia of freedom and global access to information and knowledge that floated in the atmosphere could vanish. The idea of a liberating technology and the Internet as a more democratic space was nothing more than the optimistic vision of a dream that appears unattainable. We surely have little historic ground for an objective perspective of some of the changes, but what was evident was that we were witnessing the flowering of a new conception of power—a power that had become immaterial in the loss of its grounding in material resources. And what was clear was the confirmation that we were witnessing a battle for control of knowledge—above all of information—a fight for it to be managed as a lucrative monopoly on distribution and circulation. We can see this more clearly now. The current crisis is yet another consequence of the state of general mobilisation in the battle for markets, resources and spheres of influence. This new episode reveals the power and repercussions of the new economy. We stand before a digitally connected market whose control mechanisms have contributed to designing a new geography of power, to diminishing state authority and citizens' rights. And we go on conducting business there, we adapt, we rectify, but essentially we go on working with the same parameters. We work between the small spaces of liberty that we are allowed, using the system's failures, sneaking through the gaps in it before they are closed up for good. Artistic practice too should become a show of 'resistance' to a model that seeks to

stubbornly remain in an excessively hierarchised, diffuse, globalised and standardised space of relationships, attempting to pierce through the current structure to clear the way for transformations we understand are necessary. We continue to be interested in exposing the configurations of power, convinced that the practice of art should establish mechanisms for social relations that help to insure its impact in the long term and allow the discourse to be moved beyond restricted confines to the art audience and the institution itself.

> Since 1996, when we first met in Dortmund during your residency at the Künstlerhaus, there has been a certain kind of transition observable in your work: it went from intervention in the urban public space to interventions in the virtual spaces of the Internet. Of course, you still deal with and act within various 'realities'. But how do you understand the differences and connections between environments like the city, the Internet, the museum and the 'old media'?

The public space forms the basis on which I operate as an artist and so I reflect on it and formulate questions about it. Reclaiming the public space is a historical constant that is continually being redefined; we are currently working within a very confined space, subject to constant pressures. It is necessary to expand this space, and to do so we must be very alert to proceedings directed towards limiting the use and enjoyment of these free spaces. Every working context is conditioned in different ways. The conditions for reading the situations are different, and as such expressing which practices to follow is also different for each case. The city is the point of reference for the public space as we have known it until very recently; it is subject to a complex system of relationships and ongoing negotiation. The Web, as a public space, is also determined by social and power relationships and by a system of negotiation quite similar to that of the city. By contrast, the spaces marked off for developing artistic practices are specially designed and the result of a historical evolution with the aim of creating a base for structuring artistic language. It is a specific, restricted, protected space for a highly defined cultural process. As artists we should invest much more in its management, evolution and transformation, or we should abandon it once and for all, in which case its function will remain

limited and subservient to the service and entertainment industries. As regards the media, the traditional media, i.e., radio, television and the print media can no longer continue to support themselves as a fundamental pillar of a structure that has been foundering for some time—it has already had its turn and its methods are being contended. Unilateral, closed, defined discourses that do not offer an opportunity for responding, participating or being managed collectively are no longer accepted.

> One aspect that characterises your work is that it constantly moves between a polemic/ironic simplification and complexity. Your presentation of *Postcapital* in Stuttgart suggested a clear, somehow dualistic and chronological structure at first sight: left/right, 1989-2001, communism/capitalism and so forth. But one was immediately ensnared just in constantly being forced to decide where to go, since despite all of the exhibition's architecturally clear structures, it had no obvious course. It was clear and unclear at the same time. And the more you entered the space the more you found yourself in a labyrinthine situation, gradually surrounded by more and more materials, opening up more and more aspects.
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> To me, art has a specific potential to generate complexity, in the sense that it allows things to appear in their multiple, contradictory realities: they become readable in one direction and another at the same time.

My intention thereby was to create a system of complex relationships with the audience, a dialogue that allowed the viewer to establish an interactive relationship with the project itself, constructing contradictory, even antagonistic relations requiring that all the visual grammar on display be called into doubt.

Taking decisions, deciding, is an aspect I am interested in exploring as part of the process of interacting. It compels you to take breaks during the viewing, to evaluate the different aspects and to study the assorted options presented before choosing. It's a process of construction that prompts you to solve something, to doubt or respond, to be critical about what you see and question its structure.

In another conversation you mentioned that one point of departure for the *Postcapital* project was a discussion you had with Iván de La Nuez about the consequences of being born at more or less the same time (in the mid-60s, that is) but in quite different situations: you in the capitalist conditions of 'the West', and he in the communist conditions of 'the South'. When *Postcapital*—as an exhibition project—opened in 2006 at Palau de la Virreina in Barcelona with the additional title *Politics, the city, money*, as a collaboration between you, the Cuban writer and director of Palau de la Virreina, Iván de La Nuez, and the Cuban artist Carlos Garacoia, it was basically organised along the lines of the opposition between the ideologies of the 'left' and the 'right'. At the entrance, visitors already had to decide whether to go left or right, that is, to experience the course—following the symmetrical spatial order of Palau de la Virreina—from left to right or from right to left. There was no option to enter the exhibition straight ahead (from midway), as this option was blocked by a large table hosting dripping candles in the shape of architectural icons, a work by Carlos Garacoia.

The discussion was centred on questions of specific contexts. You cannot choose where you are born and how, nor normally where you want to live. There are elements that depend on chance and which we cannot control; others, conversely, depend directly on the social, cultural, political and economic conditions that define our context. A dialogue envisaging personal circumstances as a set of dichotomies, contradictions, affirmations and negations was proposed at the start of the project. From there we would adopt certain strategies when deciding on the project's space, route and interpretation. The design obliged visitors to make decisions that influenced how the project was read in an objective way. We played with very simple metaphors of left and right, directions and routes, colours associated with the political imaginary. In this decision-making, chance, fortuitousness and coincidence also determine the reading of the project, as is true of life itself.

One interesting experience at *Postcapital* in Stuttgart was that it was perceived quite differently by the different generations of visitors.

> The so-called collective or common memory of media images—even of media icons—from the 1950s to the present varies greatly between those born in the 1940s and those born in the 1980s. It seems to me that media images, in spite of their impact, are somehow lost and forgotten very quickly. Furthermore, it seems that today the different generations are living in quite different environments in terms of images and information. It's more parallel and 'special-interest' oriented than it is common knowledge and memory.

We are still engaged in a process of digitisation that is transferring a good part of our visual legacy from its formal physical format. All of this information is being placed in containers located on a new plane near the public space with high visibility and accessibility. This circumstance generates a new saturated, ornate and noisy visual panorama, creating a new landscape that will modify the relationships with our imaginary. We can generate and consume content very quickly, but also modify and retrieve it with the same swiftness from an enormous archive continually being created and examined. The primary transformation in the era of the information society is the evolution of habits in public and as an audience, to the point that we can speak of a new era of participation and interpretation. The audience no longer wants to be limited to receiving information, loathes being the passive subject of cultural processes that exclude, and wants to interact with these new media, participating in the process of transmitting information and being an active part of this information's evolution and transformation into knowledge.

> *Postcapital* brings many layers into play. It's an ongoing, process-based and collaborative project, consisting of different modules which are connected to each other but also work independently and which together do not form a closed entity, since every single module opens up multiple discourses that always refer beyond themselves. It reminds me a bit—in a positive sense—of a Hydra, which could of course also be the perfect metaphor for the 'archive culture' itself. In this vein, *Postcapital* also seems to me like a process that explores questions anew from step to step and in doing so generates new and unexpected questions.

Formulating questions is a very important part of the artistic praxis. I wanted to get away from unilateral, closed, defined discourses affording no possibility for response, participation or interaction. The projects reproduce processes, and these processes normally imply a certain level of complexity that we should not seek to conceal.

> *Postcapital. Politics, the city, money* intertwined spatial stagings of elements from your archive, works by Carlos Garacoia and Iván de La Nuez's involvement on the theory side. In Chile (2007) it appeared as a poster which was distributed in the public space, showing—as a single item from the archive—a copy of a document containing nothing but the classification stamp used in Chile during the dictatorship. In Istanbul (2008) *Postcapital* took the shape of a workshop; in Dortmund (2008), one module of the project, the *Postcapital Library*, was part of a group exhibition on copyright issues, presented as the display of an enormous 'conference table' with a tower in the centre. In Montreal (2008) *Honor*, another module of the project, was part of the "Mediating Conflict" exhibition. In Stuttgart (2008) once again, *Postcapital Archive (1989-2001)* was accompanied by two workshops (one conducted by you, another by Yvonne P. Doderer), a large number of lectures and a programme of films curated by Katrin Mundt. Regarding these various presentations and their ramifications, *Postcapital* basically works as a resource for different activities and is in this sense quite an ephemeral project—a resource and catalyst for ongoing communication and processes. Even now in Venice, *Postcapital* is part of the Catalan Pavilion as an installation and part of one of the Turkish Pavilion's publications as a case study.

There is neither a defined format nor a project in the strict sense. We speak of tools, platforms, archives and educational processes. The spaces are thought out in terms of their transformative capacity and not as merely functional structures. They are platforms for constructing meanings and producing significance, designed as a mechanism for criticising hierarchies and the possibility of enabling tools and means of production for modifying the reality that has come about and constructing

new subjectivities. We are trying to define a specific context that allows us to learn to learn—managing knowledge through managing the performance space itself.

Your artistic practice has for years been based on the re-rereading, re-appropriation and re-contextualisation of existing audiovisual material. In this regard, you are a long-term archivist. With *Postcapital* you not only question the archive itself as a depository for knowledge production (namely a depository in transition), you also give public access to your way of working in a double sense: in the form of your audiovisual and spatial interpretation of the collected material, and in the form of your archive, which is of course related to selection and interpretation as well. Not even the search engines you use are neutral or non-intentional, since there is no neutral technology and no neutral use of it. In this sense, the status of interpretation is an important issue in the *Postcapital* project: as a more or less controlled/controlling filter, but also as the potential for a more open, complex and critical reading. *Postcapital Archive (1989-2001)* in Stuttgart was dominated by a huge architectonic structure that shifted between a sculptural ensemble reminiscent of modernist aesthetics, the silhouette of a city, and elements of a stage. This structure was accompanied in the foreground by a low circular monitor installation and framed by a frieze of images covering the walls of the exhibition space. These three elements generated an initial sort of picture (or stage setting) of the exhibition. The architectural structure could be entered from two sides—one showing a video montage of people storming (or trying to storm) walls, the other a camera panning round and round a satellite image of Manhattan (ending at Ground Zero). Inside the 'building ensemble', visitors could explore various spaces with materials from the archive, revolving around different aspects. And finally the scenario behind the architectonic structure (or behind the picture) was organised like a workshop area and like the backstage of a city. In your contribution to the exhibition *On Difference #1* you had already organised the presentation like two sides of a picture.

Visual language is the most valuable tool in artistic practice, but 'the visual' is currently specifically associated with contemporary digital territory, digital recreation, publicity; we artists are no longer the only ones capable of influencing the visual imaginary, and not only that, but I think we have lost part of this capacity. Perhaps it is the moment to stop making more noise and creating more images. This doesn't necessarily mean stopping working with images. We should join this battle and shoulder certain responsibilities: discover what is behind the images, teach how to decode them, help to open the code to the visual framework, showing the reverse side of all of this, laying bare its entrails. It is a language full of capabilities, but it is caught up in the struggle for control over it. Language can change the world, or it should.

> Another element of the 'backstage scenario' in Stuttgart was a huge tower or podium, breaking through the ceiling and concealing the server.

In playing with these aspects, I am interested in emphasising the audience's inability to access the top of the podium, to climb up the tower and take the reins of the discourse. My work is about de-hierarchising these processes. No one may raise their voice above others' voices, and so I don't let anyone do so. This is why I always position the server, the 'archive', beneath the tower, as a mechanism for distributing information that works at floor level, feeding the other elements that make up the installation. This is an attempt to indicate that what has held the tower upright for so long is precisely its hidden mechanisms. Let's learn to use them.

> We have often been asked why the *Postcapital Archive* is not available on the Internet. To me this aspect in fact has nothing to do with the project; it is not about having an open online database, but rather about the complex problems of reading and understanding information in the age of the Internet. The confrontation between your spatial (and spatially experienceable) interpretation of the material—constantly changing from site to site and context to context—and the archive as, again, the result of decisions and filters, is crucial. You cannot take away either one part or the other.

In this information society, the basic resource will be knowledge, and the will to apply knowledge to generate more knowledge should be grounded in a heightened effort to systematise and organise it, demanding that learning be lifelong. This was the big change, beyond mere formal questions about the media.

In a short space of time we have gone from visiting the museum, the library, the archive, to living within the archive itself. We do not, as individuals, have the ability, time or memory to comprehend the entire system. Researchers tell us that the human being's working memory capacity is limited to remembering four things and no more, although we can use tricks like repeating something many times or grouping and classifying things. How, then, are we going to manage this vast quantity of documents, information, images and so on? We have to generate mechanisms that allow us to transform all this noisy mess into specific knowledge to be able to develop any of the particular nuances of our personalities. And we have to undertake this in a collective way, seeking new mechanisms from a number of fields and disciplines, certainly beginning with education. I propose creating a true culture of the archive, learning to learn from the context of a wealth of choices—life within the archive, in a knowledge society that gives options and requires us to choose again and again, to learn without limits, to value new opportunities and confront numerous challenges and puzzles; a knowledge society that is unacquainted with genre work, that calls old classifications, control systems, hierarchies, legitimacies, values and so on into doubt.