

SOUTH  
OF  
POST-MEDIA

ALEJO DUQUE, FELIPE FONSECA AND  
OLIVER LERONE SCHULTZ

transcription by Maria Juliana Yepes Burgos

The first contact between labSurlab and Post-Media Lab developed out of an encounter between Aniara Rodado and Oliver Lerone Schultz in Lüneburg late 2011 – a Colombian speaking in French and a German speaking in English. From this grew several visits along with a conviction, on the part of the Post-Media Lab, that in Latin America a very dense and uniquely critical media culture had taken form. This impression was strengthened by parallel exchanges with Felipe Fonseca and MetaReciclagem – an activist network founded in Brazil in 2002, that started out re-cycling computers for communal use and later developed a more generally deconstructive approach to critical appropriation, opposing consumerism and promoting social change. Several productive encounters, for example at labSurlab 2012 (Quito), Video Vortex (Lüneburg) or the transmediale reSource (Berlin), highlighted the need for an exploration of different regional perspectives on post-media practice – especially in light of the on-the-ground experiences in community media production that emerged in discussion.

**Felipe and Alejo** – long-term collaborators and activators of the Latin American alt\_media scene – had already met up in 2008 in Geneva in a discussion about labs at the periphery.<sup>1</sup> Oliver’s invitation to pick up on that in the context of the Post-Media Lab was a welcome chance to revisit and develop this ongoing conversation, and to re-trace the lines of what had become of labSurlab and Metareciclagem among others. An online conversation followed, in January 2013, which was later solidified into the text below.

**Alejo Duque** (Colombia / Switzerland), is one of the seed members of the labSurlab network – a network of independent initiatives combining hacklabs, hackspaces, medialabs and all kinds of South American laboratories and biopolitics groups. As a follow-up to labSurlab 2012, Duque visited the Post-Media Lab on a number of occasions. He is a prolific instigator of participatory arts that aim to build cultural agitation across networks, while focusing on the global ‘South’. He has worked on setting up community network projects and non-localised hacklabs while being an active member of networks like Bricolabs, dorkbot-[k.o\_lab], Co.Operationes of which he is also one of the initiators. For more, see: <http://mdelibre.co/>

**Felipe Fonseca** (Brazil) is a researcher, media activist and cultural producer with a strong focus on networked collaboration, critical appropriation of information technologies, and free/libre/open knowledge/culture. He

was co-founder of a number of community media initiatives such as the MetaReciclagem network (<http://rede.metareciclagem.org>, 2002), Bricolabs (<http://bricolabs.net>, 2006), MutGamb (<http://mutgamb.org>, 2007), Lixo Eletrônico (<http://lixoeletronico.org>, 2008), Desvio (<http://desvio.cc>, 2009), Rede//Labs (<http://redelabs.org>, 2010) and Ubalab (<http://ubalab.org>, 2010), among others. For more, see: <http://efeefe.no-ip.org>

**Oliver Lerone Schultz** is one of the co-ordinators of Post-Media Lab and researcher at the Centre for Digital Cultures at Leuphana University, where he co-curated Video Vortex #9 and is currently involved as one of the Principal Investigators in the project Making Change within the Common Media Lab. For more, see: <http://lerone.net>

OLIVER LERONE SCHULTZ: The notion of the post-media age is important within a European context, especially given the break-up of (traditional) mass media – which provides the context for the development of potential new forms of media communications and collectivities.<sup>2</sup> Are these contexts of any relevance to you?

FELIPE FONSECA: I think there are different faces for what could be called the age of mass media. It was radically stronger in our context in developing countries, I think. In Brazil, for instance, 20 years ago, we had one single relevant broadcast company, Rede Globo. It wasn't only TV but a media conglomerate that had newspapers, a big TV channel and radio stations all over the country. It is said they managed then to pressure TV manufacturers to limit the amount of remote controls produced in the country to a maximum of 5% of TV sets until around 1990. So we were behind in the way mass media developed when compared to other countries, but at the same time the kind of control and the political presence of mass media was really heavy. I like to think we are in better times now, with more options of information channels, tens of millions accessing the internet and so on. On the other hand, people are getting more superficial. People want to buy, people want to have money, and that's pretty much everything that people aspire to these days.

The idea of post media makes sense in a way. But I'm not so sure whether the age of mass media can be analysed as a coherent whole, given the wide



Image: Mesa de Trabajo: Cultura digital y políticas públicas – one of more than two dozen events at the labSurlab 2012 – La Vuelta al Sur. Centro de Arte Contemporaneo, Quito, Ecuador. Photo by Oliver Lerone Schultz

variety of modes it has adopted in different contexts. Then I'm also not sure that a post-media age is an exact description of the current day.

ALEJO DUQUE: 'We' have never been modern, and if ever, then 'postmodernity' came first. South America is just another complex and heterogeneous continent, every country full of syncopated inequalities where modern historicity crosses a postmodernity of sorts, based on a few centuries old 'mestizaje' at times opaque, at times transparently composed by unintelligible alternate spaces.<sup>3</sup> But for many if not all of those southern communities it is not a question of being 'post' or 'modern'. In the South such notions are somewhat imported, they land real-time within processes of hybridisation-pura.<sup>4</sup> Communities always live in risk, completely unaware of these conceptual and remote classifications of 'prepostmortems'. The 'lack' of any kind of theoretical back-ups doesn't stop them from taking actions. They don't 'halt' their procedures or methods for finding ways to survive.<sup>5</sup> One could say they theorise-in-praxis. The lack of Eurocentric theories won't stop any of them from pushing from the 'undergrounds' to reshape a portion of what, on a wider scale, we could define as 'society'.<sup>6</sup>

FF: Getting back to the post-media context, me and some other people started using the term 'post-digital', but of course in the context of Brazil. There

was a lot of institutional rhetoric, governments and universities in the early 2000s about the 'digital society', 'digital culture' and all that, but very little discussion about what that actually meant. Often it felt like being 'on the internet' was something good in itself. Different groups started to criticise that perspective, proposing that we should go beyond access, beyond the digital as a goal in itself. The kind of thing these projects often do is merely create more users of the corporate internet in a completely homogeneous fashion, and that hides the fact that they can be actual authors of the internet, makers of the internet itself – ultimately challenging the ways people interact in networked environments.

We have some peculiarities – Brazilian cultures usually adopt new technologies in a very eager, sometimes obsessive way. Those of us who access the internet<sup>7</sup> are the people who on average spend most time online in the world.<sup>8</sup> Social networks such as Orkut were already big in Brazil before Facebook gained ground worldwide. So it's not only about giving people access to the internet, but also about changing the perspective and making them not only users but also people who can understand how these technologies could help improve their lives and create new possibilities from that. It's about changing the perspective, with the same kind of equipment, the same people, even, the same resources.

Here in Brazil, as in Colombia I imagine, there was a really quick demographic change during the second half of 20th century with a huge growth of urban populations.<sup>9</sup> There were no opportunities for people in rural areas and smaller villages – everyone wanted to live in big cities, and that meant a lot of traditional knowledge was lost because the sons and grandsons of farmers, fishermen and so on wouldn't want to learn from them, like in Ubatuba where I'm working at the moment. People want to get a 'proper job', maybe in an office and move to a bigger city. But I'm not particularly interested in putting more people in an artificial working environment with a computer and a desk in some office. The idea is trying to understand instead how technologies can create new opportunities for the fishermen, create local opportunities so that they don't need to relocate, to go to big cities to get a city job.<sup>10</sup>

AD: Such tensions trace our current 'contested zones' defining what we should fight for since, indeed, there's a permanent media war going on, while we're enduring the hegemony of colonial practices. There are so many different 'digital divides', those gaps between literate people with access to so called 'new' technologies and disconnected, illiterate people living in

marginality. To bridge such gaps there's a trend to 'connect' the world via ITC4D projects and OLPC philanthropism.<sup>11</sup> While now, more than before, it's crucial to find ways to become invisible to overreaching networks that exploit every click. Not only for privacy, but simply because everyone should reclaim the right to opacity.<sup>12</sup>

As to 'post-mediality', I suggest tackling it by going backwards – using methods of media-archaeology to search for different examples found in communities that short-circuit any known standard – while being fully aware that tracing such connections often appears as tropicalism or exoticism to the educated scholar.<sup>13</sup> All we have to do is learn first and foremost from those marginalised communities that have enacted this 'lab-thing-ness' long ago. That may help us better define the notion of post-mediality.

OLS: What notion of 'media' are we talking about in these contexts? You talk a lot about constellations in which it is not about digital networks in the final analysis. When I was talking with different people from labSurlab in Quito, Ecuador, there were a lot of references to different kinds of 'mediation', like the interconnection between 'tecnologías ancestrales', social technologies, politics and biotechnology.

FF: Perhaps more important than the question of any specific medium is, how do people approach those media and appropriate them? In MetaReciclagem, people without a deeper understanding of digital technologies are invited to join in a special relationship. It's more about the value of being together, learning from each other and exchanging experiences.

We've had workshops using only paper and pen, because it's not about computers or wireless networks – what matters is not what specific technology or media we are using, but the sense of opening, sometimes breaking and deconstructing these technologies, these media, these technological mean(ing)s, in order to promote some kind of change. That happens in different formats of exchange: a mailing list, meetings, like the two big meetings of MetaReciclagem where people were invited from all over the country to meet up in a specific place, like we did once in Sao Paulo, once in Bahía and last year in Ubatuba. And there are these other little meetings, simple encounters, of people in a café.

But there's another thing here: 'media' in Portuguese is a singular noun, so when you say 'a mídia' in Portuguese in Brazil you are not talking about the plurality of media because you're talking about one single, massive

(abstract) intangible thing. So if you talk about media to people in Brazil, it's very often about corporate media. People who are dealing in 'comunicação comunitária' understand 'media' as big corporate, right wing media related to old powers of big farmers and big industrial powers. So 'media' has a heavy legacy in Brazil.

OLS: How would you qualify the relevance and impact of Guattarian (and Deleuzian) theories in the Latin American context? Guattari was active in Brazil for a time<sup>14</sup>, some of his writings came out of a Brazilian context<sup>15</sup>, but to what extent were those theories around control society or post-media age really taken up? Have they been taken up or been translated into the discourses relevant to Latin American contexts?<sup>16</sup>

FF: I'm really not comfortable drawing out a single line of thought since there are a number of different, and often very contradictory theories that people are trying to apply to the way things happen in collaborative configurations. There is the Deleuzian/Guattarian influence of course, the description of the society of control, the rhizomes as escape routes, as well as Guattari's direct influence in activist media, especially the Brazilian free radio movement.<sup>17</sup> But on the other hand, there's a big influence of the more concrete tactical media theories.<sup>18</sup> Some people refer to semiotics, others adhere to a more integrated perspective by way of Castells etc., and within activist networks a number of people don't refer to any kind of academic theory. In and around MetaReciclagem there's a kind of messy environment where discussions touch on a broad set of references, and it's always on the edge of chaos. I wouldn't try to impose a single theoretical framework onto our actions because that consensus was never there.

AD: There are many more social groups (appearing and disappearing) than the number of first world educated academics can study, classify and bring to light. It's sad to see the parameters of study and approach that dominate in Colombian academia completely missing from the 'North-Continental' focus and style of research. Another post-colonial pattern. A case of endocolonisation inside academia.

OLS: Post-Media Lab (PML) has just had a discussion – that included Alejo – about the critical need to 'patch' existing technologies so as to render them functional for communities.<sup>19</sup> There is this notion that under techno-capitalism all technologies – like the net – are in principle always

'broken'.<sup>20</sup> It sounds like you both, in different ways, are talking a lot about approaches to fix, correct or replace technologies. But on the other hand it seems like more central to your accounts is a broken social fabric. Felipe, you made the observation that the older generations and communities are 'bleeding out', implying the subsumption of these communities within new modes of valorisation occurring through processes of urbanisation and metropolisation – 'the recomposition, revaluing, and devaluing of local cultures through globalisation'.<sup>21</sup> You also highlight how these traditional knowledges don't just automatically survive through their forms of communalisation.<sup>22</sup> So, how do these dimensions relate to each other, in your view?

FF: First, let me just say that what I suggested before about the fisherman can be (and often is) criticised. While there is this interest in using technologies to help communities, at the other extreme there are people who apply a conservationist take on traditional cultures, in detrimental ways – but I recognise the root of their criticism. For instance, when we started discussing digital culture with the Ministry of Culture, a lot of people would tell us 'You shouldn't put computers in these communities when there is no understanding about how to use these computers...', and in a sense that's excluding people before they even have access to them. On the other hand, no single technology will solve all the problems of a given community or social group, and more often than not they only change the configuration of issues of power, wealth and safety in a very superficial way.

This tension between respecting traditional social dynamics and promoting the appropriation of new possibilities is rather common. It requires or even induces, as mentioned before, a kind of hybrid culture. There is something about Brazilian cultures – and it can be exaggerated, caricatured – described by the Brazilian modernist movement in the 1920s. Oswald de Andrade suggested in the *Anthropophagic Manifesto* that we acquire culture and knowledge from other cultures, but we mix them, we 'eat' and 'digest' other cultures to create our own. Oswald uses this story of a Portuguese priest, Bispo Sardinha, during colonial times. The story goes that he was eaten by the Caetés people... and that was a kind of way these people had of acquiring the knowledge of their opponents.<sup>23</sup>

I like to see the way new technologies are appropriated in Brazil in a related way. We use mobile phones and social networks almost obsessively. But it's not that we believe all the Californian ideology discourse – that everybody is going to be connected and then we won't need the government,

everybody would be better off in small groups, virtual communities self-organised via digital technologies and all that shit. Instead, there is a feeling that we can use those same technologies our way, to do whatever we want to. And that can be easily understood, as we are not in a strategic position with regards to those technologies – meaning, there is very little Brazilian contribution to designing and producing them. But we will – tactically, De Certeau might add – make use of whatever technologies are available to address our particular issues.

OLS: If we bring this general perspective back into the context of what you are doing and engaging in, what does labSurlab or MetaReciclagem embody in terms of approaching or building alternatives, or forming new collectivities and subjectivities in confronting these issues?

AD: Both are very different – labSurlab and MetaReciclagem. The work labSurlab does – as I see it – is to first open the space for representation for marginal groups that never had the chance to share what they are doing.<sup>24</sup> Communities that, as stated before, live in risk. In Colombia to do work in media-activism deserves recognition as a task of the utmost importance; and for labSurlab-Medellín this was pivotal. At the end of the day, what is crucial within the labSurlab network is that we are able to elaborate a common language among some different groups from South American countries. In my experience – and I can't really speak for the whole network/group/collective – labSurlab is reshaping itself every day. One thing was how we were two years ago, when we were in Medellín, another thing is what happened in Quito, at labSurLab #2<sup>25</sup>, and another thing is today, in 2013, when we only operate through IRC channels, a mailing list and a group in the n-1.cc platform.<sup>26</sup> Since there's great need for and interest in the praxis of everyday networks of collaboration some of us have been lead into a project we called Co.Operaciones.<sup>27</sup> So as to the question: a very small 'yes' regarding 'building new ways', and this process helps us to reshape our society to some degree.

FF: So what is MetaReciclagem? We started around ten years ago as a group of people receiving donated computers, recovering them and installing free and open source software, and passing them on to social projects. We soon realised that we were not together because of computers or even free software itself, but instead for what lies behind the opening, understanding and interfering with technologies. In the course of these ten years, we've



Image: Collective issue and vision mapping for 'Una vuelta al Sur - por la construcción y evolución de maneras de acción colectiva', Centro de Arte Contemporaneo, Quito, Ecuador.  
Photo by Oliver Lerone Schultz

changed what we call ‘technologies’: not only computers and mobile phones but also farming, cooking or even organising meetings. We’ve also changed from saying we were deconstructing technologies to saying we promoted their re-appropriation for a while – and later on called it ‘technological appropriation for social change’.

Getting back to the idea of identities and networks, subjectivities and so on, MetaReciclagem has a very particular mode of organising. We had this big discussion ten years ago, one year after we started MetaReciclagem. Some of us were trying to create one institution to represent MetaReciclagem. We had huge fights at that time, and there are still some people who won’t speak to each other to this day. But in the end we decided that we would never again try to create a single institution: MetaReciclagem would be a network where people can create their own local arrangements.

There were some singular conditions ten years ago when we started out. It was basically the same time that Lula got elected as president. It was the first time in 40 years that a group linked to the Brazilian left field was the head of the federal government. They had a lot of interesting ideas which had been evolved within the third sector over decades, but didn’t have a public staff to implement the politics they wanted and didn’t exactly know how to do things.

The idea of digital inclusion emerged like that. It was a commonplace that people were becoming connected around the world but impoverished communities did not have any access. The question then was what to do about it. For concrete solutions, they had to call people from activists groups who were working with alternatives. That’s how we got involved with politics in Brazil. It is not that we believed the whole digital inclusion rhetoric, but suddenly there was this open field for experimentation with official support and some resources. And there wasn’t any stabilised body of knowledge about these things. We never believed that much in the goals of power, of the government. But these ‘outsider’ networked contexts did influence the public policies that are currently being implemented, bringing in political issues of free/open licensing, reform of copyright law, respect for traditional cultures and their knowledge, social networking as political organisation, a critical position about consumerism and the logic of economics.

But it can be said, with all this involvement with different institutions, that some of us were actually invited by the government to implement public policies. Our world view has changed a lot during this time. When we started almost a decade ago, some of us – urban, progressive, internet-savvy activists (myself included, I must confess) – thought we would be

going to poor Brazilian neighbourhoods or regions and teaching people how to become fully developed 21st century citizens, based upon a 'totally new' collaborative ethics made possible by digital networking. The truth is that often it was quite the opposite: they were teaching us a lot about simple human values like generosity, sharing, dynamic social formations oriented to problem solving, and so on. We have learnt a lot from the landless workers' movement, the organised hip hop movement and other prominent social movements.

OLS: What do you think are appropriate spaces to enable and systematise these encounters between self-organisation, experimentation and institutional landscapes? In Europe everyone is setting up a 'Lab' these days...

AD: Medellín for example sells itself as a City of Innovation, the 'Most Educated'. To contest this, we just published a book based on some records from labSurlab-Medellín and Co.Operaciones. In it the MIT Lab is not precisely quoted as a role model, it is actually defined as the Military Institute of Technology.<sup>28</sup> The book also invites us to reclaim the traditional form of the minga as a way to operate today, reaching back to learn from the indigenous and extremely underestimated communities.<sup>29</sup>

FF: The idea of a lab is still elastic enough for us to decide to use it to name spaces that host developments that wouldn't take place these days in NGOs, universities or businesses. As the public becomes privatised, as universities are increasingly being evaluated by 'scientific productivity', and companies obviously cannot lose track of profit, a lab can be a place for resistance. This doesn't mean that 'labs' can't be assimilated by the spectacle society. Rio de Janeiro, the ever more hyped city in Brazil – now even worse due to the upcoming Olympics and World Cup – has a lot of 'media labs' being created in which it is all about making money and becoming famous. But at least here the term is under dispute as we speak.

OLS: Both of you sketch an ethos of open and at the same time non-institutionalised networks. In parts of the European context there has been some renewed scepticism, like Jamie King's take on the 'impasse of political organisation', claiming that openness 'is not in and of itself an immediately sufficient alternative to the bankrupt structures of representation.'<sup>30</sup> You implicitly sketch a problematisation of certain forms of representation that seems to resemble what in Deleuzo-Guattarian terminology can be dubbed

‘micro-politics’. So if you consider the pragmatics of political positioning, what are the principles and values that connect to your activities, or that connect these loose, heterogeneous groupings?

FF: There’s always this discussion about how to organise networks in order to reflect what has been created in the network. Ned Rossiter and Geert Lovink wrote about ‘organised networks’, for instance.<sup>31</sup> In MetaReciclagem we decided to stay one step ahead of that, I guess. So the network can never be, what Jamie King calls ‘constituted’.<sup>32</sup> MetaReciclagem is pre-constituted, always changing, being challenged and reinventing itself. We only need to learn to deal with that.

Whenever I establish a partnership, I can refer to MetaReciclagem but I can’t attribute that partnership to it. Nobody would be able to make a partnership with MetaReciclagem itself because MetaReciclagem does not exist in the world of formal partnerships, but you could as a member create a simple arrangement there that would be related to the network as long as s/he follows some principles: using free and open technologies; documenting everything in our autonomous digital infrastructure – basically a mailing-list and a wiki; and working towards the promotion of social change for more collaborative, equal and sustainable futures. That led to the emergence of a lot of different institutional arrangements, so there are people who have partnerships with schools or with municipalities or even companies, or people who set up their own small consultancy businesses. But none of them can speak in the name of MetaReciclagem. MetaReciclagem does not have a coherent ‘self’; so it doesn’t matter if some of us have arrangements with, say, the public power in one locality and others criticise the same arrangements.

At the same time some partnerships will always rely on representation because that’s the only way some institutions are able to operate, for reasons of accountability or whatnot. If you’re talking about a public school, they need someone to refer to, someone to contact, someone to complain to if things don’t work out as they should. But something that emerged in our discussions in Brazil is the recognition that there are some contexts which require representation, whilst remaining sceptical about what that implies. We are talking about the self-sabotage of leaderships. We don’t want the golden dream of having a rich, problem-solving institution. There is a good amount of money being made with MetaReciclagem projects, while I still can’t pay my personal debts. And that doesn’t bother me. So there’s this kind of thing. A lot of people could have a prominent role in MetaReciclagem but

decide not to – not to become that sort of person. We always try to remain open and curious about new things and new people. In a weird way, that allows us to influence politics in a different way.

All this may sound obvious these days, but professional activists used to say we were wrong. I even heard once: ‘you have to become an institution, otherwise you won’t have any impact in political decisions’. And this is definitely not true.<sup>33</sup> By acting in a truly distributed fashion, MetaReciclagem members managed to influence a number of public projects and policies. There is no consensus about what MetaReciclagem is, but one of its most used definitions is as an open methodology that anyone can use.

AD: All we have done, both with labSurlab and Co.Operaciones, is suggest what in Brazil is proposed by undertakings like Redelabs, among others.<sup>34</sup> It is fundamental for us to be able to go forward into a common reading and conversation (like the current one) – also with peers from other countries.

Last year (2012) in Medellín – because of some ‘innovation’ funding – what we decided to do was to get more into developing actions and activities on the ground. Instead of producing more talks, we thought, let’s do things, let’s do actions. But, we thought, let’s do it in a way that’s horizontal as much as we can manage. So we invited a varied individuals and initiatives like Platóhedro, alongside institutions.<sup>35</sup> So we got the resources to organise workshops in the neighbourhoods alongside supporting a group of people from Medellín to be able to get to Quito and participate in the labSurlab meeting. For Co.Operaciones we didn’t have a specific location or space, so we embraced our permanent nomadic status, that after all gives us some tactical strength, and we made the workshops in many different places within the city, casting a wider map than the localised event, fixed to only one point.<sup>36</sup> It was complex.

OLS: You yourselves drift between Latin American, European and other contexts – does the diasporic enter into the equations of what you are doing?<sup>37</sup>

FF: LabSurlab, which to me is a kind of movement with great potential, was first envisioned in Europe. But it doesn’t matter that the first meeting that eventually gave rise to it happened in Europe. Its focus was a Latin American perspective, and the exact location of its inception is irrelevant, in the end. But I think that the sense of precarity is always there, in different forms – including here the very chance to meet at Interactivos?10.<sup>38</sup> A lot of people



Image: A fully-operational submarine built for the primary purpose of transporting multi-ton quantities of cocaine located near a tributary close to the Ecuador/Colombia border that was seized by the Ecuador Anti-Narcotics Police Forces and Ecuador Military authorities with the assistance of the DEA.

Photo by US Drug Enforcement Administration – 2 July 2010

from Latin-America met in Madrid because we couldn't afford to meet in South America. And that was a very interesting moment because there were more than 20 people from different Latin American countries; something that wouldn't happen often in Latin America.

AD: I can tell how that happened, we were all together in Spain during *interactivos*?<sup>10</sup> organised by the Medialab-Prado.<sup>39</sup> There was also a parallel meeting called Lab to Lab.<sup>40</sup> We were invited to join in their talks. One of their central discussion points was the notion of precarity. For us coming from the South, there was this contradiction of Europe being such a rich place – the place smelt of BBQ.<sup>41</sup> Indeed the so called financial crisis had hit the cultural initiatives in Spain and elsewhere, but when there are millions of people striving to survive that's the kind of precarity I'm wary about. I couldn't talk about it while we had access to food and beers, there was even someone cooking for us. For me precarity, fuck, is never having had a chance to make a meeting in a stable place, to host chats over IRC or mailing lists – even those are spaces for the 'rich'. At the meeting some of the Latin American participants decided to create a network to solve specific issues related to the Centros de Cultura de España in Latin America. Since neither Alejandro Araque nor me belonged to any of those institutions, that same night we decided to start a group at the n-1 network called labSurlab.<sup>42</sup> It was a reaction to what orbited there at LABtoLAB.

'Diaspora' is a term that I don't want to use too much, but that relates to a search. And I say that because I like to think in terms of the Caribbean space.<sup>43</sup> Basically all our 'connections' with, say, Brazil can be better bridged not through the anti-colonialist or essentialist search for a lost surrealist Otherness, but through a search for the particular differences that can put us into relation. So, it might be easier for me and my friends to relate to each other across different cultures, even if we don't come from the same path, but it is certain that in music, food and survival skills we share enough.

OLS: If we are looking at these 'wild' processes, which are subsumed, or whose subsumption is threatened by the kind of media capitalism you are talking about – then, what about rephrasing all these issues into questions of alternative forms of valorisation, and through this to questions of value production/extraction or exploitation?<sup>44</sup> When Canclini speaks of 'the digitalisation and mediation of rural processes of production, circulation, and consumption, which transfers the initiative and economic and cultural control to transnational corporations', you seem to be looking for ways to

steer clear of that.<sup>45</sup> But what are these new assemblages or these networked communities etc., actually gravitating towards, in terms of alternative systems of value-production, value in a non-economical sense. What is positively producing coherence in programmatic, ethos or values?<sup>46</sup>

FF: I don't think we can stay away or afford to totally refuse any kind of assimilation or exploitation. But also we shouldn't play a passive role by believing the discourse. We can accept exploitation sometimes. But we won't stay in that position more than necessary.

AD: I think that our most precious value is the affective network we build outside commercial sponsoring. When Felipe was talking about the funding they got, which could even be put to experiment and result in a change of governmental policies, I can't help but compare this with Colombia where we have never seen something like this. The people in charge here obey the Telefonica mentality where technology, in the end, means market reach. For example in Medellin, Colombia, Bill Gates, the MIT Lab and Mark Zuckerberg are equivalent to Hollywood's greatest heroes, and entrepreneurial role models at the same time. What can you expect from the director of a public initiative when s/he is all about the new iPad and other similar gadgets?

The Brazilian case seems in a way similar to when George Soros gave funding to the young people in the Balkans and the Baltic for cultural projects. This was the origin of Re-Lab, nowadays RIXC, and so many other groups and artists that had paved the paths of what network collaborations and art can be about.<sup>47</sup> I actually think that these examples relate better to us in the South than those happening in the centre of Europe or the USA. Why? Because they are in the periphery, because they don't speak the same language, because they have been colonies for decades, because they lived at risk and know what precarity means.

FF: Coming back to the question, whether there is a common characteristic between the diversity of projects and actions in MetaReciclagem and similar networks, it could be an attempt to oppose and resist the trend in society to have a single frame of reference. In a way that is this idea that everything can be translated into numbers, everything can be quantified and everything should be productive.

MetaReciclagem was a kind of process through which we, from our urban, academic, contemporary perspectives, learnt that things are really deeper. There are places in Brazil where you may feel as though you are in

the 19th century, places where you can order someone's death for a couple reais, or you will only have water to drink after walking 15 kilometres. All these material spaces are contemporary all at once. We cannot substitute all that for a single rhetoric in which MetaReciclagem would become a slice of reality and define itself strategically in the global scenario. We are always deconstructing people who are too sure of themselves. Common sense tells us that there are plenty of alternatives to whatever we believe. To every agnostic activist there is someone advocating ancestral spirituality, to every free software enthusiast there is a technophobe. A big diversity of opinions, fields of knowledge, expectations, positions in any given subject exist – that sometimes can be very tiresome, because anything you say will be criticised. But people keep insisting.

AD: We definitely need to learn more from those existing communities that are there with their knowledge and know-how. And in the case of Colombia these are often considered 'illegal' networks which, of course, depends on the morality that classifies them. We are talking here about people that have to find a way to survive, and many criminal activities are just default in their context as a consequence also of global economic pressure. It is nothing less than a desperate act that is expressed by a DIY narco-submarine, built in the middle of the country thousands of kilometres from the sea.<sup>48</sup> It involves huge violence to see people getting into them to cross part of the Atlantic for the sake of enabling party time in the North. It's similar to the cars that are being reused by the Cubans to try to escape the island. So if there's something to learn, it's that we need to try to pause and turn back to listen, like in the case of the minga. We have all these possibilities in the remaining ancestral communities, which are at the same time disappearing every day with their languages and knowledge, while we're NOT learning anything from them! That's why we need to push pause and stop. And that's where 'digital divides' and gaps might actually need to stay in place.

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## Footnotes

- 1 See: <http://archive.org/details/ELLabEsLaRed>
- 2 See, Félix Guattari, 'Remaking Social Practices'. In: Gary Genosko, *The Guattari Reader*, 1996, Oxford et.al.: Blackford (S. 262-272); Compare with Michael Goddard, 'Felix and Alice in Wonderland: The Encounter Between Guattari and Berardi and the Post-Media Era', in this volume.

- 3 Anjali Prabhu, 'Interrogating Hybridity', *Diacritics*, Vol.35, No.2., Summer, 2005; Nestor Garcia Canclini, *Culturas híbridas: Estrategias para entrar y salir de la modernidad*, 1990, México: Grijalbo.
- 4 'The word hybridisation seems more ductile for the purpose of naming not only the mixing of ethnic or religious elements but the products of advanced technologies and modern or postmodern social processes.', Néstor García Canclini, in *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*, 2005, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p.xxxiv.
- 5 'It is useful to warn against the overly pleasant versions of mestizaje. That is why it is best to insist that the object of study is not hybridity, but the processes of hybridization.' *Ibid.*, p.xxi.
- 6 'In this context one might think of 'savage hybridity' to point out that the condition of unspeakability among a range of identitarian positions, typical of contemporary societies, 'ungrounds' both hegemonic and subaltern social groups.' *Ibid.*
- 7 Estimated to be 94 million people in December 2012, <http://info.abril.com.br/noticias/internet/brasil-atinge-94-2-milhoes-de-pessoas-conectadas-14122012-32.shl>
- 8 An estimated 69 hours a month in 2011, <http://info.abril.com.br/noticias/internet/brasil-atinge-94-2-milhoes-de-pessoas-conectadas-14122012-32.shl>
- 9 '[...] there seems to be something different going on here, even more than just the qualitative shift that comes with the quantitative rapidity and mass of urban growth that has Mexico City or Sao Paulo experiencing in just one generation what London went through in ten and Chicago in three.' David Harvey, *Possible Urban Worlds*, 2000, Amersfoort: Twynstra Gudde Management Consultants, p. 16.
- 10 'The theory of hybridization should take into account the movements that reject it. Such movements do not only arise from fundamentalisms that oppose religious syncretism and cross-cultural mestizaje. There is resistance to the acceptance of these and other forms of hybridization because such phenomena generate insecurity among different cultural groups and conspire against their ethnocentric self-esteem.' Nestor Garcia Canclini, *op. cit.*, xxxvii.
- 11 ICT4D: Information and communication technologies for development; OLPC: 'One Laptop per Child', a campaign supported by Nicholas Negroponte, funder of the MIT Media Lab. In one TED-talk you can see a video where Negroponte comes to Colombia to give away laptops to a remote and small little town. He lands in a BlackHawk Helicopter, very proud that the Colombian army is handing over these plastic wrapped devices. See: [http://www.ted.com/talks/nicholas\\_negroponte\\_takes\\_olpc\\_to\\_colombia.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/nicholas_negroponte_takes_olpc_to_colombia.html)
- 12 'Édouard Glissant - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia', 2005, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%89douard\\_Glissant](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%89douard_Glissant)
- 13 Siegfried Zielinski and Gloria Custance, *Deep Time of the Media: Toward an Archaeology of Hearing and Seeing by Technical Means*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006.
- 14 'In the early 1980s, at the end of two decades of military dictatorship, Félix Guattari travelled to Brazil on the invitation of fellow psychoanalyst and cultural critic, Suely Rolnik, [...] They organised a series of meetings, interviews and talks across the country, debating those changes with people who were directly engaged in producing them. Some of these were edited and reworked by Rolnik into a book, *Molecular Revolution in Brazil*', Rodrigo Nunes & Ben Trott, "There is no scope for futurology;

- history will decide": Félix Guattari on molecular revolution', *Turbulence #4*, 2008.
- 15 Félix Guattari and Suely Rolnik, *Molecular Revolution in Brazil*, 1986, New York: Semiotext(e), 2008. Trans. of *Micropolítica: Cartografias do Desejo*. See also, Gary Genosko, *The Party without Bosses: Lessons On Anti-Capitalism From Guattari And Lula*, Semaphore series, Arbeiter Ring, 2003.
- 16 Here also thinking of manifestos from the context of Latin American political poetics of resistance like: Ricardo Dominguez, 'Post-Media Impossibilities (Part One) Or Mayan Technologies For The People', 1999, In: *c-theory*. e081.
- 17 Arlindo Machado, Caio Magri and Marcelo Masagao, *Rádios Livres: A Reforma Agrária No Ar*, Sao Paulo: Editora Brasiliense S.A., 1986.
- 18 See also, Clemens Apprich, 'Remaking Media Practices – From Tactical Media to Post-Media' in this volume.
- 19 'Networks out of Hands' roundtable with Christopher Kullenberg/Stephan Urbach from Telecomix, Rena Tangens from FoeBuD, Lonneke van der Velden/Daniel Reusche via Unlike Us, Alejo Duque from labSurlab and Oliver Lerone Schultz from PML. Part of 'reSource 002: Out of Place, Out of Time', Kunstraum Bethanien, Berlin, 22–24 August, 2012. See [postmedialab.org](http://postmedialab.org) and [http://www.academia.edu/2123974/Networks\\_out\\_of\\_Hands\\_-\\_Patching\\_the\\_Internet](http://www.academia.edu/2123974/Networks_out_of_Hands_-_Patching_the_Internet).
- 20 See also Alexander R. Galloway and Eugene Thacker, *The Exploit: A Theory of Networks*, 2007, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- 21 Nestor Garcia Canclini, op. cit., p.xi; see also, Li T Murray, 'Capitalism, Indigeneity and the Management of Dispossession', *Current Anthropology* 51(3), 2010, pp.385–414.
- 22 See: Ton Salman, Anke van Dam and Rik Hoekstra : *The legacy of the disinherited : popular culture in Latin America: modernity, globalization, hybridity and authenticity*, 1996, Amsterdam: Centrum voor Studie en Documentatie van Latijns Amerika (CEDLA).
- 23 Supposedly the Caetés had a tradition by which, during a war between different tribes, once the first man had died his tribe was defeated, and the body of the dead warrior would be eaten by his enemies. But the deceased was considered to be the bravest of all. By eating his body, his opponents would acquire all his courage, his spirits, his knowledge.
- 24 'ORGANIZACION SUR DEL CIELO (SanLuis Km5 – Via la calera ...', 2010, <<http://vimeo.com/9500219>>; 'La Direkta – Colombia [#labSurlab] – YouTube.' 2011. <[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TQ7\\_4E5nH8Q](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TQ7_4E5nH8Q)>; 'Antena Mutante', 2008, <<http://www.antenamutante.net/>> ... and others.
- 25 'La Vuelta al Sur', 15–23 June 2012. The website for labSurlab #2 at Quito is <https://quito.labsurlab.org/>. For a Prezi presentation on the issues and topics of labSurlab #2 by Camilo Cantor see, <http://prezi.com/e6epodcooxj4/labsurlab-quito/>
- 26 N-1: labSurlab, 2012, <https://n-1.cc/g/labsurlab>
- 27 Co.Operaciones, 2012, <http://cooperaciones.mdelibre.co/>
- 28 'Speakers at MIT's annual tri-service Presidential Pass-in-Review, held April 28 on Briggs Field, touched on the strength of military tradition at MIT, from early radar work to the current ROTC program.' Sarah H. Wright, News Office, 'Event honors MIT military tradition', MIT News, 5 May 1999, <http://web.mit.edu/newsoffice/1999/rotc-0505.html>. A version of this article appeared in the 5 May, 1999 issue of MIT Tech Talk (Volume 43, Number 29).
- 29 This describes a collective effort whereby every individual commits resources and

- time to achieve a common objective: "Minga" is a Quechua word meaning "collective work" with wide currency among popular and poor sectors, both indigenous and mestizo, of the Andean republics... By calling their movement a minga, the indigenous participants call attention to both the work that must go into politics and the idea that that work must be collective. They also, of course, reclaim it from long histories of state-led attempts to organise and control collective politics and community organisation.' Deborah Poole, 'The Minga of Resistance: Policy Making From Below', NACLA.org, Feb 16 2009. See also, <http://ia601504.us.archive.org/29/items/labSurlab-Co.Operaciones/LabsurlabCoOperaciones.pdf>
- 30 Jamie King, 'The Package Gang', 2004, MUTE. Vol. 1, No. 27. <http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/packet-gang>.
  - 31 Geert Lovink and Ned Rossiter, *Organized Networks: Media Theory, Creative Labour, New Institutions*, 2006, Rotterdam: NAI Publishers (and the Institute of Network Cultures). On the 'Will to Network' see also Geert Lovink, (Ed.), *From Weak Ties to Organized Networks, Ideas, Reports, Critiques*, Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, 2009.
  - 32 Jamie King, 'On the Plane of the Para-Constituted: Towards a Grammar of Gangpower' [http://www.shiftspace.cc/jamie/gang\\_grammar.pdf](http://www.shiftspace.cc/jamie/gang_grammar.pdf)
  - 33 For a thorough discussion of this issue see, *Instituent Practices*, Transversal, EIPCP, 2007, <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0707> and *Instituent Practices II*, Transversal, EIPCP, 2007, <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0507>
  - 34 <http://redelabs.org/>
  - 35 <http://platohedro.blogspot.com/>
  - 36 <http://cooperaciones.mdlibre.co/?talleres>
  - 37 For a cultural-political reading of the productive figure of the diaspora and particular perspectives connected to it, see Nicholas Mirzoeff, 'The Multiple Viewpoint: Diaspora and Visual Culture' In Nicholas Mirzoeff (Ed.), *The Visual Culture Reader*, London/New York: Routledge, 2002, pp. 204-214. For a more socio-political reading and links to the current crisis of the concept of national citizenship and alternative 'spaces' of the civil see, Saskia Sassen, 'Global Cities and Diasporic Networks: Microsites in Global Civil Society', in Helmut Anheier et. al., *Global Civil Society*, 2002, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.217-238, or [http://transnationalism.uchicago.edu/Diasporic\\_Network.pdf](http://transnationalism.uchicago.edu/Diasporic_Network.pdf).
  - 38 [http://medialab-prado.es/article/taller-seminario\\_interactivos10\\_ciencia\\_de\\_barrio](http://medialab-prado.es/article/taller-seminario_interactivos10_ciencia_de_barrio)
  - 39 <http://medialab-prado.es/>
  - 40 LabtoLab, 2009, <http://www.labtolab.org/>
  - 41 For a current take on this tension in perspective see: Michael Burawoy and Karl von Holdt (2012): 'Precarity from the South', [http://www.swopinstitute.org.za/files/PRECARITY\\_FROM\\_THE\\_SOUTH\\_overview.pdf](http://www.swopinstitute.org.za/files/PRECARITY_FROM_THE_SOUTH_overview.pdf)
  - 42 N-1: labSurlab, <https://n-1.cc/g/labsurlab>
  - 43 Norman Girvan, 'Martinique is not a Polynesian Island', 2011, <http://www.normangirvan.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/dash-into-to-discurso-antillano.pdf>
  - 44 See also 'A Glossary of Subsumption' at The Public School in Berlin on Jan. 23rd-25th; see: <http://www.postmedialab.org/glossary-subsumption-workshop>.
  - 45 Nestor Garcia Canclini, 2005, op. cit., p.xxxix.
  - 46 For a link between the concept of coherence and subjectivity compare: 'Information cannot be reduced to its objective manifestations; it is, essentially, the production of subjectivity, the becoming-consistent [prise de consistance] of incorporeal

universes.' – Felix Guattari, 'Remaking Social Practices', op. cit., p.266.

47 <http://rixc.lv/>

48 'Drug smugglers will resort to any number of creative DIY solutions for bringing their illicit goods to the United States, from marijuana catapults to mega-tunnels. But a new fleet of diesel-powered, fully submersible narco-subs could be the bane of law enforcement's existence... The subs are built in the thick jungles of central America, where they would be hard to detect via aerial surveillance.' Rebecca Boyle, 'The Next Generation of Cocaine-Smuggling Drug Submarines', POPSCI, 9.11.2012, <http://www.popsci.com/technology/article/2012-09/new-fleet-impressively-seaworthy-drug-submarines-shipping-cocaine-caribbean-0>