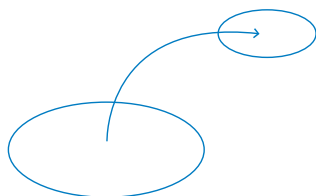


_suomeksi s. 75

I. SOMETHING HAPPENS

What happens when a 'micro-state' is declared?

An animated sequence springs to mind where a small piece of land leaps off the earth, defying all laws of gravity and logic. Something is re-stated, yet set apart: something takes place. Does it leave a geological mark like a crater? What kind of *thing* might this be? What is the move that allows it to take place?



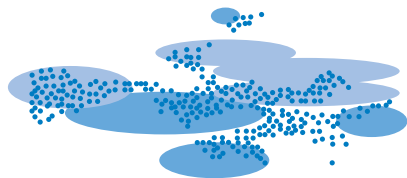
Can we separate speculation on what kind of *thing* might spring off the earth from a description of the *way* in which it goes about it or is propelled? For now, I would like to retain a certain amorphous property and suspend definition of the term 'micro-state' until we can get a sense of what might be going on with NSK, Ladonia, SoS, Transnational Republic, KREV and Sealand. Would it be possible to diagrammatically plot what happens in each declaration? For central to the experimentations being undertaken with these spaces and in this summit meeting is the very question of form and of shape; the shaping of community, democracy and perhaps even the shape of things to come. For not unlike the spaces in question, shape is both a verb and a noun¹.

Amorphous (n.) *Having no determinate shape or structure.*

Shapeless, unorganized.

From morphé – shape

Sarat Maharaj has described democracy as 'shape-shifting', 'a pulsating, ever re-configuring assemblage of non-totalisable disparities': something irreducible to the counting of heads to be represented within a given constituency². To think this idea we must get a handle on the tension between the lived material realities, actions and movements of people and their process of formalisation (both nominally and spatially) into categories of state, nation, party, community, constituency, island etc. In what way might the Sealand's proclamation of independence or the declaration of NSK's State-in-Time help us grasp this constitutive process of formalisation?



There is an act of repetition, of re-calling the state, or even re-stating in each instance. To designate this activity the 'making micro' of the state as we know it, would fail to open out all the possibilities for thought that these projects perform. For the micro-state would designate something like a smaller *version* of the state,

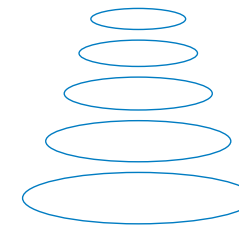
like a computer programme – modified, perhaps with some extra features or refinements.³ However, it would seem that the possibilities for thinking repetition, even mimesis through the move enacted in these projects, would obliterate 3-D questions of scale, and posit different active spatial and spatialising, formal and formalising processes. In diagrammatic terms, the micro-states offer us something more like an experimentation with the tension between the dots (people?) and the circular shapes (constituencies or states). It is in this way that the micro-states critically hover between noun and verb, between activity and object. In this instance, it is through the positing of different kinds of forms and space that the question of the border and its constitutive primacy is altered.

In *Difference and Repetition* (1994) Deleuze talks about repetition as an act of differentiation, a thing or object's *style* of becoming different from itself as circumstances of time, location, literal and figurative terrain vary. A 'thing' is thereby no longer recognisable by its identity. In this sense, objects or things become the bearers or receivers of particular acts of mimesis, and are therefore in themselves, only appendages of acts.⁴ In this 'return of the state' the shift of focus to the act of making different through different styles of repetition and the shift to examining the active relationships between thought, action and objects, present many possibilities for a continuance of thinking-action in the vein of the projects assembled here. In *what way* does Ladonia's simultaneously territorial and virtual state recall the grounds of the 'real' state? To focus on

this activity, on this style of differentiation, we are compelled to develop ways of accounting for or tracking the action that produces the repetition and re-stating of the state. Where in this action, or in this mode of experimentation that is the micro-state, do modes of dissent or affirmation of Empire unfold? It is always possible that by repeating national and global structures, a simple miming or re-affirmation of global capitalism takes place. It is precisely these crucial issues that are taken on differently and continuously explored in all six micro-states in question.

II. WHERE IS HERE?

Doreen Massey has recently spoken about the way most people imagine and structure their spatial loyalties and affiliations.⁵ In a way that is similar to the embedded structure of writing an address on an envelope, Massey contends that we often see ourselves located in terms of a Russian doll-like sequence. Flat 4, Number 7, Tilliruukinkatu, Tampere, Pirkanmaa, Finland, Nordic Countries, Europe, the West, the World, the Universe etc.



Massey sees this structure of locating oneself as a kind of masking of how the global (which is everywhere local and never 'universal'), might

¹It is interesting that the initial call through the title of this event is for us to Amorph! -- or almost de-shape in some way.

²Maharaj, S. 'Xeno-Epistemics: Makeshift Kit for Sounding Visual Art as Knowledge Production and the Retinal Regimes.' Documenta 11, Cantz, 2002. Maharaj goes on to give the example of the English 'right to ramble' which stipulates that walkers must repeatedly walk down certain paths in the countryside in order for them to be kept open. If a path falls into disuse, it is recuperated into 'noun-ness' or private property.

³We may however, need to continue using the term micro-state for now in the hope that a better term will emerge from the summit meeting.

⁴Deleuze, G. (1994), 'Difference and Repetition', trans. P. Patton. Athlone Press, London

⁵Doreen Massey. Keynote Address, Theatre Capital session of 'Civic Centre: Reclaiming the Right to Performance', London, April 2003.

be implicated in our here and now. In other words, by seeing our local as the product of a straightforward, linear, filtering down of the global through larger international, national and regional structures, power is held at a conveniently abstract distance and we are unable to imagine, grasp or make palpable the complexities of the globalised world in our everyday lives. Massey asks: 'where would you draw a line around the lived reality of your daily life?'⁶ What shape would it take? This is a crucial question, as it impacts on our ability to act, and our sense of both where and how we might be able to intervene in the world.

Again, the six micro-states in this event might enable us to grasp the constitutive shape of the global in the local and the meaning of democracy in the global present of our everyday lives. If democracy is about 'shape shifting', and not about being able to count up the heads within a particular pre-given 'shape' or constituency, there is a need to imagine and experiment with other practices and modes of belonging. Perhaps we could say that the micro-states de-familiarise the masking Russian doll and provide tools to imagine, recognise, make understandable or legible this complex 'here-ness'. However, if we are to take these experiments seriously, we must also ask how being a citizen of one of the Transnational Republics for example, might jar with the Russian doll model which does reflect more territorial forms of governance and the law? If I were to commit a crime on a piece of land under a certain jurisdiction, and the laws of that land prosecuted me, could I request extradition to my republic of choice for a fair trial? In what way are these micro-state

experiments as 'non-things' inserted or installed into the juridical real?

The move that declares a micro-state usually involves a setting apart of a piece of territory or virtual land, or the creation of a system of citizenship, rules or structures that stand apart from our sense of daily administered reality. They become something autonomous: something that operates according to its own rules. In this sense micro-states share a lot in common with other activist and political groups that use the idea of autonomy as a way of building a self-valorising, self-sustaining. Such communities often work as both models *and* as tools for engaging liberal democratic governments. I am thinking specifically here of the autonomous communities of Chiapas or some of the First Nations communities in Canada, both of whom work within complex double jurisdictions.⁷ The European Roma Nation without a territory is currently under negotiation, while more dispersed initiatives such as the International Parliament of Writers (IPW) works both on a symbolic level and through concrete negotiations for 'Cities of Asylum' with different national and municipal authorities around the world.⁸

NSK talk of needing new systems of coordinates and new means of orientation. Their temporal materialisations of the State in the form of embassies, or their ideas of notional space, of pure exterior, border without a territory, open up some productive ways of thinking about these suspended autonomous spaces. For suspension implies not only a kind of hanging dispersion of solid particles, but also a kind

of interruption or a delay in normal proceedings. It becomes clear here that the mode of organisation that produces often-temporary realisations of somewhat recognisable 'states' or autonomous communities, cannot be separated from any procedure of 'installation' into the existing order.

III. SOMETHING TAKES PLACE

I would venture to say at this point, that what is most significant about the micro-states participating in this summit is the various ways that they experiment with 'formalisation' and the ways in which they suggest an interruption of the formal process of constituting the multitude as a state. Why people are brought into relation, how people are brought into relation and what is thereby produced, are remarkably inseparable movements here. If the aesthetic connotations of the term 'formalisation' are strong, it is no co-incidence. In discussions about NSK Mojca Oblack concludes that the NSK state-in-time can ultimately be seen as an artefact. This is inadequate as not only does it close down the state-in-time through an easy naming process (i.e. NSK is an artefact), it also allows Oblack to determine NSK's relationship to the state proper far too quickly. Oblack contends that NSK are *installed* into the social as an artefact.⁹ NSK for Oblack become a kind of aberrant art object/artefact who we can relate to the state as simply an installed artefact. This seems like a shortcut, a way of describing the complex process of formalisation that takes place with the micro-state; one that forecloses its experimental potential. For if NSK are so easily recognisable as an artefact, then we would know instantly what they are, where they belong and what their place is in the world. It is interesting however, that Oblack uses the term installation when trying to describe the micro-state's relationship with the state. Peter Osborne has noted that in the con-

ceptual grammar of installation (art), the *process* of installing is denoted by *its result*: 'an installation'. In other words, the term installation is used precisely when the object is a concept and there is no clear artefact *put* somewhere. For Osborne, this shortcut points to ontological questions raised by the issue of *realising* and *instantiating* 'ideas'. Oblack's use of the term installation then, points to an ambiguity in the kind of form (artefact or idea) she attributes to NSK. Installation becomes a term that points to another kind of collapse of verb and noun, a procedure that denotes a tension between movement, action and more seemingly solid notions of objecthood.

Might the minutes of a meeting, the arrangement of empty chairs after a meeting, the formation of a committee, the building of a town hall or the erection of a wall around a community, be seen as different realisations or instantiations of events and communities with varying degrees of solidification? The modes of operation and formalisation performed and enacted by the micro-state affect both how it is recognised and its ability to alter the terms of its recognition. It must be sufficiently realised in order to be legible or recognisable as something, a structured movement, a formalisation, *something* that exceeds a purely amorphous entity. Yet, if it is overly legible it becomes easy to name it and therefore make it recognisable under the terms of our existing knowledge (for instance, we can all recognise a commune, and we know that an installation is Art). Retaining an active tension in this movement of formalisation, not quite becoming artefact, and not dissipating into total 'amorphousness', would seem to be central to the experimental potential of these projects.

Any state's method of maintaining a 'pure identity' can be seen in what Jacques Rancière

⁶ibid

⁷There are 1200 autonomous communities in Chiapas. They run parallel to government structures, but are not interested in secession. The Zapatistas refer to autonomy as the *ante-sala* or the entry point into democracy. As such autonomy is seen more as a method than as an end point. The reclamation of dignity, control and (political and ideological) independence, rather than strictly territorial independence, is considered necessary for the creation of the relational structures and organisations that would constitute 'freedom'.

⁸See Vered Amit and Nigel Rapport, 'The Trouble with Community' for further discussion of the IPW.

⁹Oblak, Mojca, 'Neue Slowenische Kunst and New Slovenian Art', *Art and Design*, Vol.9, March/April, 1994: pp.80-87

calls its 'criteria of admission'.¹⁰ By applying a criteria of admission, states not only define who they see as their inhabitants, but also what the strangers at the gate must become if they are lucky enough to be allowed in. In his work with the so-called *sans papiers*¹¹, Alain Badiou explains that if those who are invisible to the state are 'admitted', or become visible, they could only do so if the terms and definition of the state itself changed.¹² In other words, a state would have to utterly change how it counts people, how it takes people into account and its very structures of representation, or what we know as parliamentary representative democracy. The state would have to alter its structures of representation and develop forms of recognition that would not reduce all outsiders to its own terms (i.e. render all 'outsiders' French or seamlessly incorporate 'foreigners'). If these changes were to begin the state would be un-made and the entity that we know as 'the state' or the subject that we recognise as 'the foreigner' would not hold.

In his 15th thesis on contemporary art, Badiou says that it is better to do nothing than to contribute to the formal ways of rendering visible that which Empire already recognises as existent.¹³ Relating this to the discussion of Oblack, we might speculate that if in this context, contemporary art were to produce new but easily recognisable artefacts that are readily definable and simple to place, then its radical potential would be greatly reduced. In this sense the re-stating that takes place in the 'micro-state', this repetition and difference, must sustain itself in the realm of active suspension, a suspension of its recognisability as object or nothing, and through a maintenance of tension in its movements of formalisation. Might one of the

ways of tracing whether the micro-state simply affirms Empire and global capitalism then, be a tracking of this tension? If the micro-state were simply a repetition, if it were seen as an object, a return of the state in a smaller form, or as an end and not as an action it would be easily recognisable to Empire and thus an affirmation of Empire. By throwing the micro-state up in the air again and insisting on this shift of focus to the relationship between thought, action and object and to its style of differentiation, the modes of recognition, thinking and knowing that would render the micro-state a simple repetition of the same is obliterated. This shift of focus is enacted through a performed meeting and a collective mode of engagement that seeks not to repeat or to represent, but to run with.

Last year Ladonia began to receive many requests for citizenship from Pakistanis looking for a place to live that might enable them to improve their circumstances. Through media attention and the sheer scale of Ladonia itself, word got out and thousands of applications for asylum and citizenship were received from India, Vietnam and Nigeria among other countries. The interest and promise sparked by the concept of Ladonia in the minds of many living in poorer (non-European) countries is a stark reminder of the territory being written over by the six micro-states. While the state of Ladonia in no way restricts its citizenship, it did explain that the applicants misunderstood and misinterpreted the art project. This development in Ladonia throws into relief some important issues: in what way might this complex incident have brought out the criteria for admission into the micro-state?

Here, the would-be migrants *failure to recognise* Art amounts to a refusal of admission. A refusal of admission to what? As the Liberal State officially respects the Autonomy of Art, wouldn't it be the ultimate liberal gesture to use art as even a strategic alibi in this instance? At the same time, a moral judgement on the limits of privileged liberal European 'art games' with all its disclaimers would short-circuit these important experiments in formalisation and re-separate the realms of art and politics once again in a gesture that would betray the thinking with these experiments. For it is in this space between recognition and non-recognition that the activity of the micro-state can precisely suspend itself. In this sense, the failure to recognise western liberal definitions of art and autonomy gives some important pointers to possible openings for micro-states and those interested in thinking about ways of organising and strategising around issues of migration, asylum and borders in Europe. Sarat Maharaj regularly re-poses Duchamp's question of 'how to make a work of art that isn't a work of art?' For him, to be 'doggedly eye-proof' is to resist recognition, to elude ready-made categories and work on what he calls other aesthetic geometries. In the same way that the *sans papiers* must resist becoming recognisable to the state on its terms, the micro-state, if it is interested in retaining a state of critical suspension, must also defy being so straightforwardly 'art-ified'. As we saw earlier, in this shift of focus to the *act* or style of differentiation in the re-stating of the state, a 'thing' can no longer be recognisable by its identity.¹⁴ In the spirit of this shift, a restless struggle with language, terms, categories, moments and modes of formalisation become crucial.

Alain Badiou's 9th *Thesis on Contemporary Art* states: 'The only maxim of contemporary art is: do not be imperial. This also means do not be democratic if democracy implies conformity with the imperial idea of political liberty'.¹⁵ The tantalising call to make visible only that which Empire does not already recognise as existent, is coupled with this question of how to 'be' global without being imperial? This is the world to invent. To create a locatable but moving, restless, attentive, open and pragmatic form, would be an acute activity of creative and political formalisation; a tracking and making recognisable of democracy as shape shifting in the local. It would stamp out the pre-made, yet give workable experimental forms from and through which to act concretely and in concert. The Zapatistas call their autonomous communities not an object, or a utopia, but a 'method'. What is at stake in this performance event and the projects assembled in the gathering, is a sequence of experiments or laboratories in which we can investigate, and participate in the actions and formalisations of the 'micro-state' or the method of being autonomous. In doing so, we might at least begin to imagine alternative shapes to actual existing democracy.

Susan Kelly

¹⁰ Jacques Rancière (1999) 'Disagreement – Politics and Philosophy', trans. Julie Rose, University of Minnesota Press, Minnesota

¹¹ The 'sans papiers' is the name given to 'undocumented' workers in France.

¹² Alain Badiou (2001), 'Ethics, An Essay on the Understanding of Evil', trans. Peter Hallward, Verso, London and New York

¹³ *ibid*

¹⁴ Deleuze, G. (1994), 'Difference and Repetition', trans. P. Patton. Athlone Press, London

¹⁵ Alain Badiou (2003), 'Fifteen Theses on Contemporary Art', Keynote Address, Performance Ethics session of 'Civic Centre: Reclaiming the Right to Performance', London, April 2003.

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