

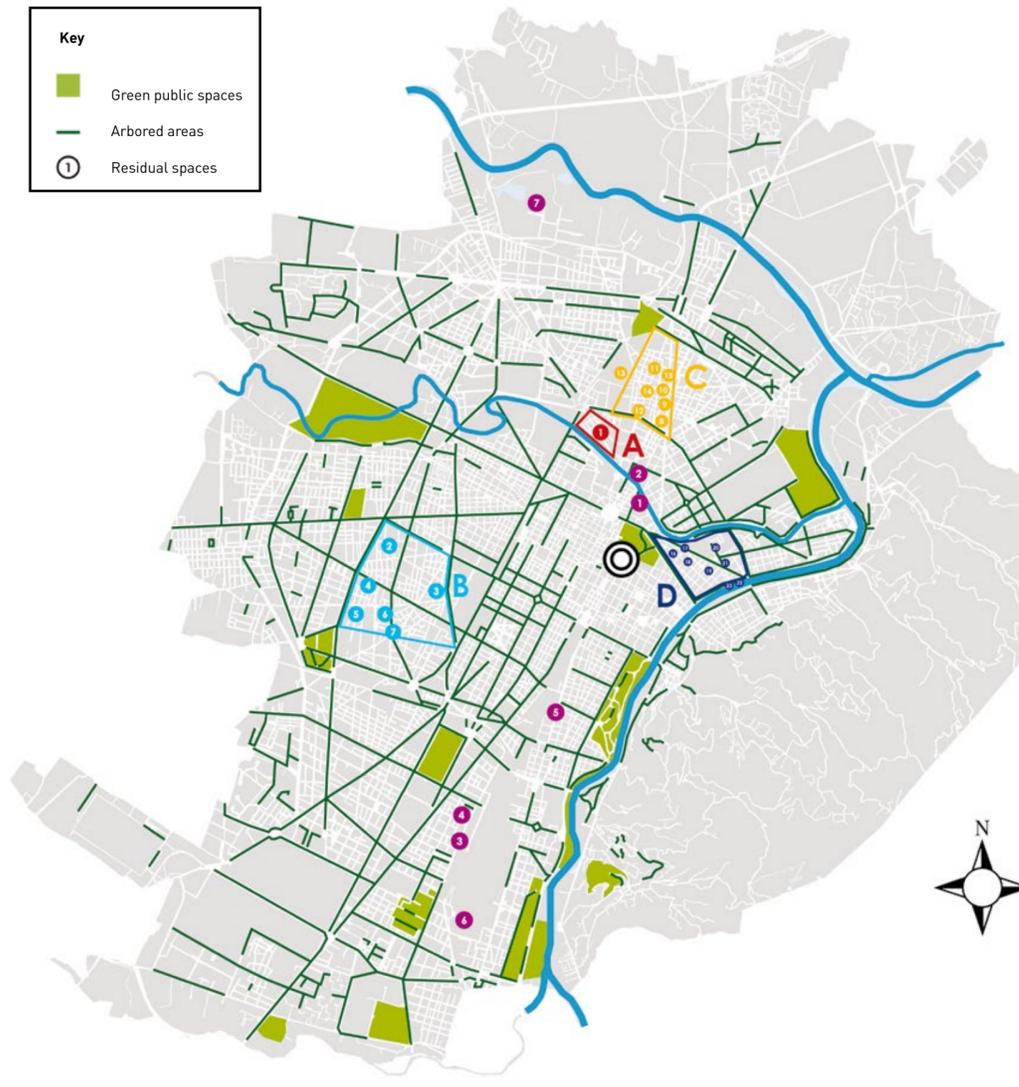
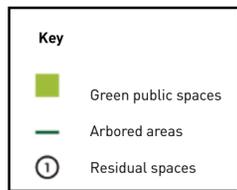
# CATANANCHE CAERULEA

Catananche caerulea is a pretty perennial herbaceous plant belonging to the family of the Asteraceae. It is about 50-80 cm tall and easy to cultivate. The narrow grey leaves are chiefly basal. The flowers are lilac to pale blue or white with a darker central spot. When closed, they look very much like those of the cornflower, with silvery bracts, but once open they are larger and flatter with petals fringed at the tips. The flowers last for many days and are thus suitable for cutting and drying. Flowering is abundant, usually already in the first year, and continues all summer, in particular from July to September. In ancient Greece, Catananche caerulea was thought to possess the power to make whoever consumed it fall in love. Thus it was a fundamental ingredient of love philtres. This characteristic has given the genus its name: from the Greek "katanangkazo" which means "to force, to use violence". The species name derives from the Latin "caeruleus": sky blue or pale sea blue. The vernacular name the Americans have given to this plant is Cupid's dart, and still today it is used by some as a symbol of love. In nature it grows in dry meadows, at altitudes between sea level and 800 metres. Since it commonly grows in sandy or limestone soils, it can thrive in residual areas among ruins and rubble. It is present in the southern provinces of Piedmont.

Type: perennial herbaceous plant  
 Family: Asteraceae  
 Native to: Southwest Europe  
 Height: cm. 50-80  
 Spread: cm. 30-40  
 Flowering period: July-September  
 Colour of flowers: light blue to lavender  
 Leaves: grey-green  
 Exposure: full sun  
 Water requirement: low  
 Type of soil: loose, sandy, well-drained  
 Particular notes: withstands drought, attracts insects, excellent for cut flowers; flowers from the first year  
 Plant under absolute protection (ex art. 15 of R.L. 32/1982)

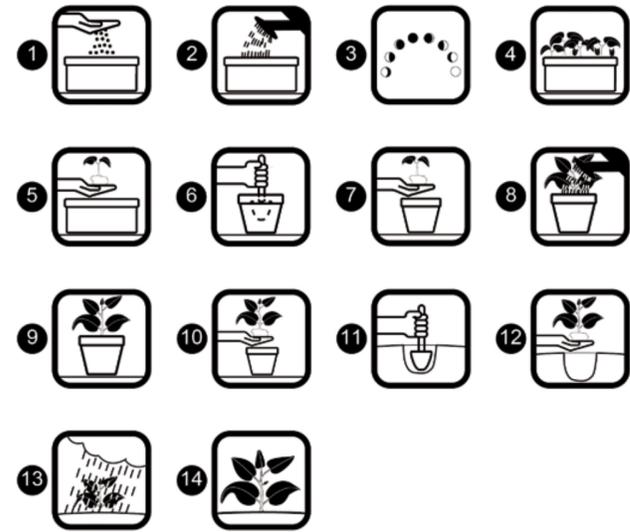
## GENERAL CULTIVATION HINTS

Seeds germinate quickly and easily.  
 Period: early spring, months of March, April.  
 Materials: soil; it is preferable to use seed compost purchased in a gardening shop. If this is not available, mix two parts of peat and with one part of coarse sand. Do not add any type of fertiliser.  
 Pots, seed-trays, etc. Recycled containers, like yoghurt or ice-cream pots, or egg cartons, can also be used. They must be perfectly clean, with a hole in the bottom of each.  
 Distribute the seeds over the surface of the soil.  
 Cover with a thin layer of soil. The covering layer must be just slightly thicker than the diameter of the seeds.  
 Water by immersing the seed-containers in a basin of water and leaving them to soak until the soil is damp, after which the soil must be kept damp for several days.  
 Keep in a well-lit place but avoid exposure to direct sun.  
 Germination should come about in 2-3 weeks.  
 As soon as the seedlings are big enough (generally after 4-6 weeks) transplant them into larger pots.  
 After 8-10 weeks the plants are ready to be planted outdoors. Plant them in full sun in a well-drained area.



- A District VII - Aurora**  
1) via Cecchi/via Piossasco
- B District III - Cenisia/San Paolo**  
2) via Spanzotti/via Monte Albergiani  
3) via Monginevro/C.so Ferrucci  
4) via Orsiera/via Isonzo  
5) P.zza Robilant  
6) via Carso/via Lancia  
7) via Lancia/via Caraglio
- C District VI - Barriera di Milano**  
8) C.so Palermo/via Montanaro  
9) L.go Giulio Cesare/via Palestina  
10) L.go Giulio Cesare/C.so Palermo  
11) C.so Vercelli/via Desana  
12) Piazza Crispi  
13) Ex Incet  
14) Road border spaces  
15) Spina 4
- D District VII - Vanchiglia/Vanchiglietta**  
16) Largo Montebello  
17) Public Garden once Italgas property  
18) Piazza Santa Giulia/via Giulia di Barolo  
19) Via Balbo/Area Pedonale  
20) C.so Farini/C.so Belgio  
21) C.so Farini/C.so Regina  
22) Lungo Po Macchiavelli  
23) Murazzi

- Areas explored by PAV as possible location for the New Alliance workshop**
- 1 corso XI Febbraio/L. Dora Savona
  - 2 L. Dora Firenze/C.so Giulio Cesare
  - 3 Via Zino Zini
  - 4 PAV
  - 5 p.zza Nizza
  - 6 v.Passo Buole ex Fiat Avio
  - 7 via Fermi Basse di Stura



1. seeding: hand strewing seeds into a little table soilplot
2. wetting: watering can while splashing
3. wait, wait and still wait
4. emergence of seedlings: a soilplot filled with fresh seedlings
5. transfert: hand picking up a seedling
6. hand using a stick to dig little holes in the soilpot
7. hand transplanting a seedling into an individual pot
8. wetting: watering can while splashing
9. a seedling while growing in the pot
10. hand picking up the plant
11. hand using a stick to dig little holes in the soil
12. hand transferring the plant to the soil
13. rain
14. plant growing in the soil

## PROTECTION OF THE FLORA

The Italian flora, thanks to the diversity of habitats present in the country, is the richest in Europe. It comprises approximately 10,000 species among vascular plants, mosses, liverworts and lichens. Protection of this biodiversity is a strategic tool to ensure the quality of life, indeed the very survival, of our species. Until 1997, when European Directive 92/43/CEE "Habitat" was assimilated, in Italy the question was delegated to the individual Regional Authorities. In most cases, these adopted absolute protection measures that only applied to a small number of species growing spontaneously in the regional territory. In Piedmont, for example, the Annex to Regional Law no. 32/82 "Regulations for conservation of the natural heritage and the environmental order" gives a list of wild plant species of which it prohibits "the gathering, removal, damaging, possession of parts, as well as buying or selling them whether in the fresh or the dried state". This list thus determines which plant species are the subject of "absolute protection". And all the other plants? The same regulation tells us that "for all species not included on the list, gathering is permitted of five specimens per person per day, without uprooting the underground organs. This prohibition excludes the most commonly consumed edible species". Thus all Piedmont's wild plant species are formally protected, what varies is the degree of protection. This type of approach to protecting the flora is important, because it is based on the concept that every species, independently of its rarity, is an indispensable member of the whole and thus all must be safeguarded, for the natural equilibrium and for the life of other plant or animal species.

A further peculiarity of the same law is that, under it, absolute protection does not coincide with the rarity of the species. Indeed, if we look at the images of the plants on the list of R.L. no. 32/82, the question spontaneously arises: "how can there be no rare species that are insignificant, that have inconspicuous flowers?" In reality, first and foremost this regulation protects those species, not necessarily the rarest ones, which are most threatened by the risk of intensive gathering by man: for their beauty, for dietary or medicinal use, etc. Other species, perhaps much rarer because they grow in extreme or highly localised habitats, do not enjoy absolute protection as they are "protected" by their unattractiveness as per today's aesthetic standards.

Lastly, in terms of sanctions, the recent Decree Law 121/2011 makes changes to the penal code, establishing that "whoever, apart from the permitted cases, destroys, collects or possesses specimens belonging to a protected wild plant species is punishable with a fine of up to 4,000 euro, except for cases in which the action concerns a negligible quantity of such specimens and has a negligible impact on the state of conservation of the species". This sanction relates to the protected plant species indicated in Annex IV of the above European Directive 92/43/CEE "Habitat".



- 1 NEW ALLIANCE, Look at Yourself in the mirror and You'll see the world, PAV Living Art Park, field trip in Via Passo Buole (ex industrial area), Torino (I), June 7, 2011
- 2 NEW ALLIANCE, Look at Yourself in the mirror and You'll see the world, PAV Living Art Park, field trip in Piazza Nizza (spontaneous urban garden next to the subway), Torino (I), July 19, 2011
- 3 NEW ALLIANCE, Look at Yourself in the mirror and You'll see the world, PAV Living Art Park, field trip in via Zino Zini (a small motorway in the city), Torino (I), Sept 27, 2011
- 4 NEW ALLIANCE, Look at Yourself in the mirror and You'll see the world, PAV Living Art Park, field trip in Lungo Dora Savona/Corso XI Febbraio (crescent-shaped garden), Torino (I), Oct 11, 2011
- 4a NEW ALLIANCE, Look at Yourself in the mirror and You'll see the world, PAV Living Art Park, field trip in Lungo Dora Firenze/Corso Giulio Cesare (wasteland), Torino (I), Oct 11, 2011

Credits: PAV/Parco Arte Vivente, Torino

Mandragora Mas.

## SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2012

### CAE/CRITICAL ART ENSEMBLE

### NEW ALLIANCE

### NEW ALLIANCE METHOD

### ZONARTE



## Coming soon

On Thursday September 20<sup>th</sup> 2012

### NEW ALLIANCE

until October 21<sup>st</sup> 2012  
 Exhibition including materials collected during the participated project in collaboration with CAE/Critical Art Ensemble (Steve Kurtz, Lucia Sommer, Steven Barnes)

6 pm, introduction  
 6.30 pm, Skype conversation with Steve Kurtz (Buffalo - USA), interview by Yael Plat PAV, Turin

On Sunday September 23<sup>rd</sup> 2012

### Workshop\_27/NEW ALLIANCE METHOD

10 - 12 am, Introduction and instructions  
 1 pm, community lunch  
 PAV, Turin

2 - 5 pm, Planting field trip (Catananche caerulea) in precarious urban spaces

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# PAVzine

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Project  
CAE+PAV

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CAE/Critical Art Ensemble

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of the less-than-pleasurable aspects of creating and engaging liberated moments and spaces. When speaking of drift as a utopian process, CAE is not claiming it is without risk to one's body and personal autonomy. It is rather a seeking of an intersubjective positionality that authority withholds because it suggests that a situation, or even the entire social world, could be other than it is. That is the utopian gesture, and its constant companion is precarity.

### Precarity and Resistant Cultural Practices

The Situationists were not the first cultural activists, nor are they the last, to count precarity as a constant companion. Any cultural worker who has performed resistance in a public space is quite familiar with this relationship. [As an operational definition, by "public" CAE means any space outside of the domestic that is not secured for specific access.] Breaking the law is often acceptable to authorities, because laws ruling comportment in public space are created less for stopping criminal activity and more for stopping resistant activity. For example, when CAE witnessed NYU students performing an action that questioned why the Museum of Natural History in New York City would have a statue of equine-mounted Teddy Roosevelt leading a Native American and an African American (on foot, of course) into the implied sunset, security guards responded immediately, and police shortly thereafter. The police threatened the participants with arrest for blocking public pathways (in spite of the fact they were in constant motion). When asked about the dozens of people on the steps of the museum who were stationary and blocked clear access to the entrance, the police replied that they could break the law because they weren't bothering anyone.

This is why CAE does not make an operational distinction between a park and a mall. The security is the same, and the demand of public order and limited speech is the same. Unfortunately, when resistant politics enters the realm of cultural production, a higher degree of risk has to be embraced. The laws are plentiful and function at differing levels of intensity. When an activity that annoys authority needs to be stopped, laws governing public nuisance, public disturbance, di-



sorderly conduct, unlawful assembly, or blocking public access are brought into play. If someone needs to be removed from the public sphere for a longer period of time, more serious charges are used, such as inciting a riot, causing a false public emergency, or criminal mischief. For authority, these laws are helpful because they can be applied in a completely arbitrary manner. Anybody can be arrested at any time, and the arrest can always be framed as stopping criminality rather than quashing resistant performativities and minority representation.

Even when interventionists have institutional cover of a legitimized sponsor to avoid legal troubles, other disciplinary agencies are waiting in the wings. For this situation, agents of the status quo, from politicians and lawyers to church groups and social workers, can take up the disciplinary slack. In such cases, cultural activists do not have to worry about jail, but the pushback can still be at best tiresome and at worst costly. Expression management is a ubiquitous phenomenon that permeates almost all of everyday life. As the structural meltdown of global capitalism flows deeper into crisis, resistant expression will be increasingly repressed. Under such conditions, the cultural worker's relation to precarity will intensify.

Cultural activists have always functioned in a double bind in relation to precarity. On the one hand, creative cultural work tends not to be richly rewarded economically for the grand majority of those who participate in this kind of production; however, economic impoverishment is often perceived as a fair exchange for a culturally rich, diverse, and even happier life. On the other hand, if repression of cultural activism is intensifying, precarity beyond the economic becomes an increasing part of social life for resistant cultural workers. We have no choice but to make it a friend, by finding better ways to use it in struggles against oppression and social injustice. As a matter of personal testimony, at one time or another, CAE has met almost every disciplinary agency imaginable, and yet we would not give up our relationship to precarity. The many empowering and pleasurable experiences have certainly outweighed the horrible ones.

### Ecological Precarity

Perhaps cultural workers are actually tripling down on their relationship to precarity. Ecological precarity is the general condition of existence for humans and many other species brought about by the purposeful ethical bankruptcy of neoliberalism. Basing all economic activity around the principle of greed has created the most environmentally destructive conditions in history. Not only does capital seek to avoid any relation to the reproduction of the social beyond making sure the labor pool does not dry up, it has no relation to the preservation of life in any form. The biosphere is understood only as a resource to be used until depleted.

To be fair to the early capitalists, they could not have foreseen the current economy of scale that would change the perception of the earth from that of a seemingly endless repository of resources to one where the end of resources is a near-future certainty. However, once this fact is understood, why wouldn't capitalists veer away from their ecocidal path? They don't because of their firm belief that nothing more than utilitarian value exists beyond an individual's ego. All objects (and that includes humans) are there only to be used and organized in a manner that yields power, wealth, and prestige. So long as the individual ego is not damaged in the process, the process is good. Any external death and/or devastation resulting from economic practices is simply a necessary sacrifice for the immediate glory of economic gain. Since neoliberals recognize the ego as finite, and its death as marking a real end of economic activity, they recognize no relation to the material world beyond this end. The future extinction of humans and other species is not recognized in their business plan. They are as removed from the infinitude of time as they are from the web of life. Now, within the ecosphere, they are committing the greatest crime of their two-century history. From an ecological perspective, the neoliberals have become a true death cult, in their belief that the weight of one of their own egos is greater than the weight of the universe.

The dominance of this ideology of perverse individualism, where the worst of human qualities are believed able to transform the world into a better place for all, justifies an ecological dynamic that causes everyone to suffer in the present moment from environmental devastation. At the heart of this matter are nondegradable and nonremediable pollutants. The worst assaults on the ecosystem come from this source. [CAE would be remiss if we did not note the strong second place finish of the development and extraction industries for their serious contribution to environmental devastation.] The neoliberal perspective is that the cost of pollutants should be "externalized" (paid for by someone other than the corporation, which usually means the public). For the most part, they have been successful in doing just that—to such an extent that the price of remediation is beyond the capacity of world markets. Whether we consider climate change, loss of diversity (i.e., mass extinction), decline in the quality of air and water, or health crises brought about by pollutants in the environment, the cost to fix what the earth cannot is incalculable.

Despite the neoliberals' tremendous success world-wide at polluting without legal consequence, they continuously work for even less environmental regulation. In general, neoliberals tend to dislike regulation of their own activities; however, regulating and managing everything else is fine, particularly if it involves any kind of market force like labor organizations, competitive upstart organizations, or resistant activity. Then the government's job is to pass legislation that protects property and keeps "public order," and to enforce these laws and regulations to the letter.

Those who are concerned with environmental integrity have had some victories against the deregulation movement in spite of its massive wealth and (corrupt) political influence. Of particular importance for this essay is the protection of endangered species and habitats in so many countries. In the U.S. in 1973, President Nixon signed the Endangered Species Act into law. He was, of course, forced into this position by environmentalists and a variety of concerned citizens, but also by some unlikely conservative allies in the grip of renewed fears about the consequences of overpopulation. This piece of legislation gave near-extinct creatures a recognized legal status, and this status gave environmental advocates a way to push back against those who were prepared to kill any living thing that stood in the way of profit.

### New Alliances

Given the dual nature of species that are both endangered and protected, it appears we have a possible site where the power of precarity in conjunction with law can work in favor of a healthy environment. CAE is suggesting integrating the shared precarity of endangered plant species and endangered social and green spaces in a manner that strengthens and protects both. In many countries, endangered plant species enjoy special legal protection. At the very least, they elicit public sympathy and can function as an ethical hammer for conservationists. Though these plants may be weak as a species, they are quite powerful as individual specimens. If that power can be connected with human and nonhuman spaces that are endangered by various capitalist agencies seeking profit and/or power by re-appropriating territory held by people unable to defend it, perhaps a socio-political symbiosis between plants and people could develop. The plants would expand in number as people plant them for protection, thus addressing the problem of species collapse, and the spaces would have the legal protection accorded to the plants to better resist aggressive or hostile take-over attempts. The kinds of spaces we have in mind are those threatened by unjust development: community gardens, common areas, endangered rural spaces, any kind of squatted territory, and those threatened by extraction industries, including farmland, wilderness, or even suburban aquifers.



Looking back over the past four decades in the U.S., some notable successes in invoking the Endangered Species Act (ESA) jump to our attention. In 1990, the threatened northern spotted owl was used to save its natural habitat, old growth forests, from overharvesting. Millions of acres were set aside in the Northwest, but over the past two decades the debate between conservationists and the logging industry has continued. While the logging industry has managed to continuously reclaim previously protected acres through court actions, lobbying, and even ecological debate (the industry claims that the extinction of the spotted owl is due to the invasion of the competing barred owl, rather than a loss of habitat), the area has been largely saved.

In 2006, conflict between conservationists and the extraction industries heated up over development of Great Plains grasslands in Nebraska and South Dakota. The black-footed ferret, thought to be extinct until rediscovered in 1982, became a symbol of the rich diversity of life on the Great Plains under threat not just from big extraction, but also from broken public management systems. The introduction of more ferrets helped to extend territories protected from developments and hunters.

The fairy shrimp was used to limit urban sprawl in Riverside, California. Not as adorable as a spotted owl or a black-footed ferret, this species almost had its wetland habitat completely destroyed by developers who covet the flatland on which its rare vernal pools exist. The developers got the better of this fight, but some of the habitat was saved, as opposed to the original plan in which it was all to be completely eliminated. When it comes down to practice on the ground, this outcome seems to be fairly typical. Projects can be stowed or limited, but rarely are they completely stopped.

Take one of the first classic cases in the US: the snail darter fish and the development of the Tellico Dam in Tennessee. Biologist David Etnier discovered this rare fish in 1973, allowing

environmentalists to bring a lawsuit against the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) on the grounds that the dam destroyed the limited habitat of an endangered species. This suit, a follow-up to one that invoked the National Environmental Policy Act, was brought by activists using the ESA. The Supreme Court eventually heard the case in 1978, and ruled in favor of the environmentalists. Tellico supporters went into action in Washington, D.C. to get Congress to exempt the dam from all law pertaining to environmental protection. Through a lobbying initiative, an exemption was placed as a rider to a water and energy appropriations bill. Later, amendment processes were proposed to limit the ESA's power. The dam was completed in 1979. In practice, we must face the reality that this model is imperfect, but it does allow activists to bring some form of power to the table. In the majority of cases, environmental complaints have only thrown a wrench in the works and slowed the process of destruction. The TVA still proudly proclaims that no environmental action has ever stopped one of their projects. However, pressure groups representing endangered species or habitats have forced them into negotiations that have impacted the formation of plans. In the case of the snail darter fish, while the land was lost, plans were developed to move as many of the fish as possible to equally hospitable waters. In 1984 the fish was reclassified from endangered to threatened.

One must ask, if found endangered animals tend to have the greatest capacity to motivate environmentalists, why not bring endangered animals species into compatible, threatened environments? The primary answer is because they are mobile. They don't stay where they are put, and they can be hard to find after release, especially if they are a small population. In a rural area there has to be proof that the endangered species is in immediate danger due to a specific action by a specific agent for the law to be enforced. That means the organism must be close to the dis-ruption. As CAE said above, injunctions are rarely granted, but polluting or destructive activities can be moved off specific sites. Only plants will deliver the sedentary constellation necessary for this possibility. In urban areas, plants are really the only choice, since the environment is not hospitable to animals. Trees could perhaps also be used in this situation.

Let's take the worst-case scenario in which industry money and political influence are simply overwhelming in a given situation, or legislation has been written with great care to favor industry. We have already seen examples of the former. As for the latter, in Italy for example, environmental protection legislation distinguishes between wild and cultivated plants with regard to endangered species. Cultivated plants, no matter how rare, enjoy no protection under the law. Consequently, CAE's plan would be difficult to enact. For this reason, Italy is an ultimate testing ground for us. The first challenge is how to classify what is wild and what is cultivated, particularly if it is in a fallow space. While a rare orchid in a hothouse may be easily classified as cultivated, classification may not be so easy in a vacant lot.

Let us assume that we fail this test, forcing us into a second line of defense: Can we make a successful media campaign from such an action? To be sure, profiteers have no shame or guilt, but they usually have a public image they wish to protect. If the right species is selected, the public imagination can be captured and directed toward a protective position. Increasing the amount of stakeholders is always a necessity in bringing a developer to the bargaining table. Obviously, this will require the right choice of species to transplant into the endangered habitat. Choosing a species to save in accordance to its value in the environment is not an option. So many grasses and trees fundamental to ecosystems need saving, but if we are to construct a new coalition we will have to use a more traditional category of choice—aesthetic value. This aspect of the process is unfortunate, but abundantly clear: if the plant is not of an equivalent to the noble beasts at the top of the food chain—aware inspiring raptors, or cuddly mammals—they will probably go the way of the vast unrepresented populations of life forms heading for extinction due to some repulsive characteristic or underwhelming visage. For this job only one choice is reasonable: wild flowers—big fields of flowers. The image of bulldozers running over flowers, and not just any flowers, but endangered flowers, can have a dramatic mobilizing affect on the one hand, and create a powerful public relations problem on the other.

CAE should also add that this tactic in and of itself is probably not powerful enough to have a large-scale impact. Using this method is best when it is mapped onto other networks of resistance. When a public demand for the preservation of natural or managed reserve habitat, or a resistance based in stopping the poisoning of an environment by toxic waste is already mobilized, this tactic can function as an extremely useful supplementary activity.

The new alliance between all that is precarious in the human and plant kingdoms appears to CAE to be a highly functional system of conjunction capable of producing political might; however, questions about logistics may remain. After all, such actions will require many plants, and this need requires a second new alliance between people. One of the divisions that traditionally has been counterproductive for ecological activism is the separation of urban and rural environmental action. While empathy between the two sectors is undoubtedly abundant, bringing the groups together in a practical sense is difficult. This is not due to a lack of desire, but to a lack of infrastructure, which restricts people to acting locally in real space. As much as virtual space helps in organizing and fundraising, ultimately real space solutions are needed for real space problems. For the plant-human alliance to occur, another has also to occur between rural and urban activists and concerned citizens. The new food movement has demonstrated that micro-farms and urbanites can come together for a new type of micro-market based on direct local sales. Why can't a similar structure be made for a new production of environmental politics, in which a rural contingent can oversee the production of plants while an urban contingent raises money and organizes the distribution actions and media campaigns when necessary?

### In Italy

In October of 2011, CAE went to Turin, Italy to do a workshop on "new alliances" in collaboration with PAV / Parco Arte Vivente directed by Piero Gilardi. As the institution's name implies, it is committed to cultural action that engages daily ecological commitment as an act of resilience. From its programming, to its architecture, to the remediated site on which it is located, PAV signals a change in the relation of humans to the environment and stands in stark contrast to the modern sites and structures that surround it. Needless to say, CAE could not have asked for a better partner in getting this project off the ground.



The workshop consisted of four key parts that would lay the groundwork for the action. CAE would describe the plan and variations on what the new alliances could consist of. We would then proceed by having an agronomist familiar with environmental laws system (Daniele Fazio) speak about laws regarding endangered species at the national, provincial, and municipal levels. Then a botanist/gardener (Filippo Alossa) would talk about local endangered plants and demonstrate how to grow them. The workshop would end with a series of scouting missions to determine the best sites for planting.

When CAE arrived in Turin, Orietta Brombin, the Director of Education and Training Activities at PAV, who was also functioning as producer for this workshop, had assembled an amazing team of participants, including our much-needed lawyer and agronomist. Prior to our arriving, the team had already scouted the locations, so we only needed to proceed with the first three parts. The legal session was somewhat disappointing in that we learned that Italy made a cultivated/wild distinction when it came to endangered species—cultivated plants were not protected, no matter how rare. However, this wouldn't slow a media campaign, and there did appear to be some gray area as to how cultivation could be proven when coming across a plant in a fallow field. Growing the plants, and acquiring the means necessary to grow a lot of plants, was all quite possible. We were able to choose a flower easily enough (Cupid's Dart, *Catananche caerulea*), although this process was determined largely by the market for commercially available seeds. Obviously, not just anyone can harvest the seeds of wild endangered plants. Fortunately, a wide variety of endangered plant seeds are commercially available. Finally, we came to realize that the project would have to be extended, as Alossa strongly recommended that we use a natural cycle for growing in natural elements and avoid the artificiality of the greenhouse, as greenhouse grown plants would be too weak for natural conditions. He suggested beginning to sow the plants in late spring, and transplanting them in late summer.

As the process continues in Italy, we hope to launch a parallel action in New York State as means to contribute to the struggle against hydraulic fracturing by the extraction industry. At this point, CAE is of the belief that it will be even more effective in the U.S.—particularly in terms of media actions.

### Reversals

In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno bemoan the political and cultural regression of reason into a device that furthers a variety of authoritarian tendencies—and conversely, the subsequent failure of the Enlightenment to fully implement its lofty goals of liberty, equality, and progress. As reason regresses, these goals begin to invert and eventually become their opposite. The Enlightenment promised liberation from scarcity, and yet no matter how much is produced, the condition of lack continues to grow. The science and technology that seemed the path to perpetual peace and progress instead created a war machine with destructive capabilities that threaten the existence of human life itself; and the rationality that would organize human life for equal benefit of all transitioned to a means to create maximally efficient death camps for the extermination of the Other. The relationship to nature becomes perverted as it too is perceived as an Other equally as deserving of full exploitation and elimination. Cooperative or symbiotic relationships with the earth are eliminated in favor of those of dominion.

This concept is echoed by Ivan Illych's notion of specific diseconomy. Illych believed that institutions in the capitalist world tended to reverse themselves over time, as they continuously absorb the corruption inherent in capitalism. For example, the idea of public education has tremendous appeal, and free schools and universities as the material manifestation of this ideal would seem like boons to democracy and industry alike as they prepare people for critical, self-reflective, and creative lives. Yet these institutions end up functioning in the opposite manner. They become spaces where mindless ideology is replicated and creativity is undervalued if not completely discouraged. As students are prepared to serve industry as bureaucrats and technocrats, they are taught to tolerate long hours of boredom sitting at desks, staring into monitors, and memorizing the tropes of the free market. Rather than honing their intelligence, students are made increasingly less knowledgeable and are guided by the reduction of diverse knowledge systems to the singular category of enterprise.

Perhaps the most recent incarnation of this notion is Jean Baudrillard's principle of "immanent reversal." The central characteristic of this position is the shift from the dominance of the material order to that of virtuality. Power, pleasure, and seduction are no longer located in the material world. Rather, the house of mirrors that is the virtual world, in which meaning is no longer tethered by referents, becomes the focus of life itself. In this technosphere, the highest degree of illusion produces the highest degree of value and garners the highest degree of praise.

While all of these notions tend to have a negative trajectory, they also point to the possibility that tremendous change is possible. Radical shifts can occur, and if indeed we are at the bottom of the free market barrel, why can't the next reversal be for the good? A micro war machine of human, rifle, and armored personal carrier could just as easily be human, brick, and barricade. CAE sees no reason why through committed struggle we cannot make ourselves intelligent and creative again, and reverse precarity into a positive, productive power contrary to the present general condition.

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## Reinventing Precarity Critical Art Ensemble

Precarity has once again become a privileged category in the economically depressed West, frequently used to describe everything from individual existence to the general social condition. Whether in domestic or public life, no one escapes the probability that a radical disruption of personal security or routinized social conditions could occur at any moment. While precarity is no more (and is probably less) representative of life now than it has been at other moments in history or on other present-day points on the globe, it is a noisier part of the collective consciousness. The common presence of precarity in both materiality and ideology make it a category that must be engaged before it is totalized as an irreversible narrative of the fear-mongering security state. In this essay, CAE discusses one means through which precarity might be reinvented as a tactical form of productivity that is resistant to the destructive initiatives of global capitalism in both rural and urban areas, thus applying precarity's positive qualities in a manner that makes it more conjunctive with peace and justice.

While CAE would not dare attempt to list all the tendencies that produce precarity in the West in a document as brief as this one, we will mention a few we believe are key. First and foremost is the reorganization of labor in a manner that allows various institutions of production to acquire every possible cent that social efficiency can yield. The intensification of administrative digitality, in association with improvements in real space transportation, enables transnational capital to find and exploit the lowest labor cost and establish this bottom line as the basis by which all other nonspecific labor is measured. Consequently, the value of labor pools is very volatile. One can live in a company town (or city) one minute and a ghost town the next. The devastation of a labor pool implosion causes a cascade effect that sucks small business and local service industries down with it.

At the top of the labor spectrum, the situation is a little better. In this case the worker has a desired specific skill (the digital equivalent of a craft or professional service skill) that cannot be replaced in a manner similar to replacing a standardized bolt in a machine. Beyond their "craft" abilities, these workers typically offer a diverse set of problem-solving and creative skills that can also be exploited. Moreover, these workers are completely flexible. They can work wherever they are, and they can work at any time for the precise amount of time a project requires. In order to do this, they have their own workstations, and assume both the costs of their training and the perpetual retraining needed to keep pace with the rapid change of the digital world. Consequently, in contrast to those at the bottom of the labor spectrum, they do bring some leverage to the table when selling their labor on the market. The life of these workers is more feast or famine. They enjoy comfort and benefits while working, but must always be preparing for the in-between. The cost of acquiring the skills to reach this upper wrung of the labor ladder is considerable, often amounting to the equivalent of a first mortgage and thus increasing the pressure for steady employment. Moreover, these workers are in competition with each other on a global scale, making for regional divisions that add to their particular type of precarity.

A second major tendency adding to the precarity of our age is finance capital's love for risk. Given that high-risk investments are the best way to maximize profit (if one is successful), high-stakes gambling in the financial sector is attractive to many. Because of this tendency, even the very wealthy are involved in the relative general condition of precarity. Back in the time of C. Wright Mills, the elite class was quite stable, consisting of family units of intergenerational wealth gleaned from manufacture, agriculture, or the extraction industries. Now, a sizable percentage of the elite class is part of the extremely volatile gambling class of finance capital. Members of this group can find themselves swimming in billions of dollars one moment, and crashed into the millions or even broke the next. Yet as bubbles burst and legitimized ponzi schemes collapse, there are not only the losers of the investment class, but the millions of small investors who are in the dark about what is actually happening to their investments. Retirement accounts are wiped out, homes are foreclosed upon, and the reality of downward mobility hits domestic space with full force. Profits may not trickle down the class ladder, but the material consequences of risk by the top investors always make their way to the bottom—and not as a trickle, but a deluge.

Within the social sphere, there is not much left to plunder but the public sector. In the United States, where people need a safety net more than ever, these funds are being handed over to elites in the forms of tax breaks, corporate subsidies, bailouts, and the legitimized raiding of public coffers. And capital has no better way to extract money from the working classes than through war. The exorbitant military budget is a means to redistribute funds to the wealthiest through weapons manufacture and security services (the privatization of the military).

Finally, CAE must acknowledge the fundamental structural shift occurring in Western economies. As the economy moves from a mode in which industry dominates to one in which service becomes hegemonic, excess populations that have no place in the new economy begin to form. If no institutions exist to restrain those lost in the shuffle, the underclass, marked by permanent precarity, is radically expanded. Given that education is among the first casualties of austerity policies, not much is being done to ameliorate this situation. To make matters worse, many of the expanding areas of production do not require copious amounts of labor.

As global capital slips deeper into structural crisis and desperately seeks to maintain profit margins, becoming-precarious in a negative sense emerges as a dominant narrative. A heavy miasma of nostalgia for the stability of the past hangs in the air. Even if we could bring back the 1950s, would we want them? In the U.S., social improvement was linked to the intensification of accumulation, but for whom? Large marginal classes were not included in the amelioration of the social sphere by capital caught in a "class compromise." And many of those who were included did not enjoy the most desirable conditions. Men in "gray flannel suits" crowded the streets going to stable life-long jobs devoid of satisfaction, where one did what one had to and didn't rock the boat. Do we really want an encore performance from organization man? Do we want to go back to the hegemony of a family structure representative of the way only a small fraction of families actually live? Do we want to trade precarity for alienation and marginalization so profound it catalyzed ongoing cultural and political resistance for the liberation of women, LGBTs, and a rainbow of minorities? The answer instead may be to remake precarity so that it serves people and the improvement of the social sphere, until it becomes possible for us to eliminate its negative aspects that function as basic conditions of life.

### Dérive Revisited

Dérive (drift) can be interpreted as a utopian process. To be sure, it has much to recommend it in terms of positive process and even in terms of outcome. The drifter can break the routines demanded by the normative structures and dynamics of the urban environment. The drifter can resist the rational and let submerged desires stored in the unconscious guide the way. A drift should be unproductive, lack practical performativity, and in so doing become adventurous. Drifters should mix with estranged environments and mingle with humans that exist on the fringes of their everyday existence. In so doing, experience is restructured outside the imperatives of the status quo. Drift requires active, engaged participation in immediate real space. Unlike strolling, it is not a distanced form of cool observation and data collection. Drift is rather a temporary demonstration of what liberated being-in-the-world could be if the disciplinary apparatus of the spectacle and the illusions of virtuality were not ubiquitous components of our lives.

When drift is described in this manner, the process sounds so pleasurable, and this pleasure is readily accessible if we would only enact it. However, another component is an integral part of the process—one that is generally glossed over, but always implied—and that is precarity. A drift could lead a person into a marvelous introduction to subaltern culture one never knew existed, but it could just as easily end in jail time or a painful beating. Surely if we gender this process or view it through the prism of unjust majority-minority relations of any kind, precarity intensifies. How will any agent charged with the enforcement of the status quo view someone in the midst of a drift? Jail would seem to be the probable outcome if the norms of the street are in any way jeopardized. Certainly the Situationists were not so naive as to think this way of acting could be wholly positive. Their record of physical risk and their time in jail speak to their direct experience