

Drifting Through the Knowledge Machine

Maribel Casas-Cortés and Sebastián Cobarrubias

1. Introduction

In August 2005, the administration of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill declared that Labor Day would be cancelled as a holiday for librarians, professors, teaching assistants (TAs), students, and all those involved in classroom instruction. Only certain workers counted as labor and thus would enjoy the national holiday. Frustrated by the administration's arbitrary decision that knowledge-work wasn't real work, a group of grad students, course instructors, and undergrads decided that it was time to make the conversations about workload, usually whispered in the hallways, public. Though none of us cherished Labor Day over May Day this half-cancellation of a work holiday provided the perfect opportunity to call attention to the economic and social role played by the university in our everyday lives and beyond. It was a great excuse to put our questions about work—immaterial and otherwise—into conversation with many others and begin to discuss ways of intervening. Constituting an improvised research team armed with the material of our labor—notebooks, blackboards, cameras, recorders, and chalk—this group of university employees conducted a “stationary-drift” during Labor Day, occupying a corner of one of the busiest parts of the campus for hours. The group interviewed passersby, distributed questionnaires, recorded video, conducted collective discussions, and generated participatory maps on what work and non-work meant for us versus what it meant to the administration. The invitation was made to map out Labor Day on campus and interview each other, starting with the guiding question: “What’s your labor like, today and everyday?” All of this in order to discuss and investigate our own conditions of life and work in our temporary territory: the university.¹

The ad-hoc intervention group generated four audio-taped interviews, three audio-taped collective conversations, fifty surveys and questionnaires, four color-coded maps, one-page of conclusions on butcher paper, thirty digital photos, twenty minutes of videotape, and a three-page research log, as well as signs, flyers, and some graffiti. This initial “drift” on Labor Day 2005 became the first step in a plan to carry out a longer militant research project to challenge our own notions of the university and discover new strategies for struggle. September 6th 2005 became the first public event of “Mapping the University: Drifting through the Knowledge Machine” by the 3Cups Counter-Cartographies Collective.

“So what were the findings of your little “laboratory research” experiment?”

While the intervention was short, it did open the door to a lot of questions and generated interest among quite a few people as to continuing with explorations of our own territory: the university. The arbitrary decision of who did or didn’t deserve a work holiday provided the fruitful tension that we needed to begin a process of rethinking the university as a site of production and not as an ivory tower for the contemplation of the outside world. A broader public intervention could be made to raise attention to the multiple forms of labor at the university, and more generally to the power and political economy of universities in the post-Fordist economy. Some of the initial conclusions from that day focused on two aspects of *inhabiting* the university:

- (a) Our spatial understanding of the university as a discrete and untouched entity was totally inadequate for figuring out what was going on and what to do. This notion obscures the multiple roles of universities in employment and flexible labor markets, the knowledge economy and corporate research, defense contracts and recruiting, finance capitalism through loans, university endowments and investments, and gentrification.
- (b) Other experiences of campus activism, while necessary, seem insufficient to respond to issues such as new working conditions of a fragmented/temporary labor force. We wanted to start asking questions about possible ways of organizing and acting beyond student solidarity efforts with often faraway causes, as well as rethinking the reasons for the unsuccessful TAs union organizing (especially in North Carolina).

These two initial and interrelated suspicions were all well and good but moving on them was not easy to figure out. If there are so many things going

on in the university, such a fragmented population of professors, ground-keepers, adjunct instructors, food service workers, grad students, undergrads, clerical workers, and so many transformations happening simultaneously (privatizations, subcontracting, tuition hikes, neocon policing), how could we figure out how it all related, how to tie existing struggles to others and how to provoke new ones?²

In order to move these questions forward, some of us took up the inspirations provoked by research projects enacted by social movements themselves. What follows then is a description of two concrete activist research projects that pushed us to take the step of investigating the university. The research strategies developed by the collectives *Precarias a la Deriva* (from Madrid, Spain) and *Bureau d'études/Université Tangente* (from Strasbourg, France) produced strong resonances and provoke a chain reaction to start a research project on campus. These aren't random choices, but ones that gave us the necessary tools to investigate the material conditions of academic knowledge production. After presenting these two inspiring examples, we come right "back to school," mapping out the contexts we are facing of universities in the "knowledge economy," and drawing specific reappropriations of *Precarias a la Deriva* and *Bureau d'études* on how we might move forward.

2. Research Experiments Initiated by Social Movements

An exciting wave of interest in research is rising among social movements as a way to understand and reshape the effects of capitalist globalization in everyday life. Research becomes a political tool to intervene in the processes that are moving us towards a neoliberal world. Different experiments of militant/action/radical research had been provoking our imaginations and contaminating our practices for a while. It made sense: a way of producing knowledge specifically for social movements in order to evaluate steps taken, to understand new contexts, or to open up new issues of struggle. It seemed particularly pertinent to the post-Genoa, post-September 11th, and post-Iraq moments: how to make sense of it all and move forward; how to explore alternative ways of challenging a complex system of oppressions? At times, we were confronted by the difficulties presented by the apparent distance between much "research" and "activism." However, we began to see, through many of our own itineraries in movement collectives that dabbled in research, as well as through inspiring examples such as *Colectivo Situaciones*, that it was possible to think of a form of in-depth research that came from and responded to social movements, whose methods themselves reflected movement politics, and whose results informed on-the-ground resistance.³

Precarias a la Deriva: Research methods for everyday interventions in a post-Fordist economy

The impact of neoliberal free-trade policies being promoted in Spain since the late '80s produced a harsh process of deindustrialization, followed by a transition towards a post-Fordist economy based on services and finance. The sharp shift in labor patterns included rising unemployment and proliferation of temporary contracts, affecting in singular ways different sectors of society. The “flexibilization” or “casualization” of labor markets required important cuts in labor protection laws and the loss of the multiple benefits guaranteed by the previous welfare-state economy.⁴ Discontent with such an aggressive deregulation of labor markets was made explicit through several anti-European Union campaigns organized not only by official labor unions, but fueled by environmental and peasant sectors, immigrant groups, and especially by a frustrated youth filled with promises of neutral-sounding flexible labor but ending up with what became commonly known as *contractos basura* (garbage contracts). The shift in labor conditions was the target of critiques and mobilizations across Europe. European social movements started to coin these (re)emergent labor conditions as precarity.⁵ Thus, what in English would be called flexible, casualized, or contingent labor (without any kind of necessary critical connotation) is being politicized in several European countries as “precarious labor,” denouncing its fragile and exploitative character and promoting it as a new identity of struggle. *Precariedad* or precarity refers, then, to the labor conditions that arose after the transition from life-long, stable jobs common in industrial-capitalist and welfare-state economies, to temporary, insecure, low-paying jobs emerging with the globalization of the service and financial economy:

The precariat is to post-Fordism what proletariat was to Fordism: flexible, temporary, part-time, and self-employed workers are the new social group which is required and reproduced by the neoliberal and post-industrial economic transformation. It is the critical mass that emerges from globalization, while demolished factories and neighborhoods are being substituted by offices and commercial areas. They are service workers in supermarkets and chains, cognitive workers operating in the information industry.⁶

Precarias a la Deriva was born out of this intense political moment at one of the places where issues of *precariedad* were being heatedly discussed: Eskalera Karakola, a women’s squatted social center located in the Lavapies neighborhood.⁷ After reflecting upon their own conditions and participation in the different mobilizations and current debates around labor issues many

of the women organizing out of Karakola found that existing modes of analysis and organizing did not correspond well to their situations.

Why precarias or feminine precarity?

The first babbles of this action-research project are traced to the context of the general strike taking place in Spain on June 20, 2002 as part of the anti-European Union campaign during the Spanish presidency of the European Union. In the space of the Eskalera Karakola, several women started to share their unease with the general call by the big labor unions to stop all production chains for twenty-four hours. They wanted to be part of a generalized and explicit discontent against labor conditions, but the traditional tactic of the strike assumed an ideal type of worker that was far from their particular conditions. Striking in the context of a per-hour contract, domestic task, temp work, or self-employed job would not have any of the expected effects. Nobody would even realize it. With this frustration as their point of departure, the women involved with Eskalera Karakola started to brainstorm new ways of political intervention adapted to their circumstances.

The discussion ended up with a proposal: the *piquete-encuesta* or the “picket-survey.” During the day of the national strike, several small groups of women armed with cameras, recorders, notebooks, and pens were dispersed throughout the city of Madrid. They aimed to hold conversations in the marginal centers of the economy where the strike made little sense: the invisible, non-regulated, temporary, undocumented, house-based sectors of the market. The main theme of the survey centered around the question: “*Cual es tu huelga?*” (What is your strike?) The survey by and of *precarias* stopped the productive and reproductive chain for some time and more importantly gave a temporary opportunity to talk among, and listen to, an invisible and fragmented population. The exchange resulting from that day was inspiring: they opened a potential space for unmediated encounters between otherwise unconnected women, who while sharing similar precarious conditions, had radically different experiences.⁸

Within this effervescence, the research project called “On the drift through the circuits of the feminine precarity” emerged. The object of study and intervention were the labor conditions created by a post-Fordist economy among women, working at different sites of the casualized job market in an urban setting. Through a close engagement with their own experiences, this project would refine the notion of precarity, to articulate a more situated version of it. Thus their research coalesced around the notion of *precariedad femenina* (feminine precarity) as a particular form of flexible labor: gendered but not sexed.⁹ This qualification of precarity challenges overly production-centered analyses and offers an understanding able to capture the effects of changing labor conditions in the continuum of produc-

tion-reproduction. One of this project's analytical contributions consists in breaking the distinction between "labor" and "life" usually maintained by traditional political economy. They analyze how the post-Fordist changes in labor are producing *post-Fordist* lives, looking at the new subjectivities generated. The condition of *precariedad femenina* cannot be reduced only to negative labor conditions pointed out by the notion of the precariat as a cousin of the *proletariat*. This is how they define themselves, acknowledging the multiple character of living as "*precarias*" (the feminine version of *precario*), pointing out how subjects are produced under both oppression and empowerment:

We are *precarias*. This means some good things (such as the accumulation of knowledge, expertise and skills through our work and existential experiences, which are under permanent construction), a lot of bad ones (such as vulnerability, insecurity, poverty, social instability), and the majority, ambivalent stuff (mobility, flexibility).¹⁰

Why "derivas" or "drifting?"

Finding collective ways of struggle was one of the main challenges to be addressed, especially focusing on the possibilities of articulation among women who shared the common experience of *precariedad* yet were employed in extremely different types of work from university professors to sex workers to translators to domestic servants. Based on the excitement of the results of the picket-survey, a plan for reconnecting and exploring the diversity of experiences of *precariedad* in a more systematic way started to take shape. They needed research methodologies that would fit their circumstances and be relevant to provoking conflict. Looking for a procedure that would be able to capture their mobile, open-ended and contingent everyday lives, they found inspiration in the Situationist technique of "drifting." Situationist researchers wander in the city, allowing for encounters, conversations, interaction, and micro-events to be the guide of their urban itineraries. The result was a psychogeography based on haphazard coincidences. This version though was seen as appropriate for a bourgeois male individual without commitments and not satisfactory for a *precaria*. Instead of an exotic itinerary, the *precarias* version of drifting consisted of a situated and directed trajectory through everyday-life settings.

Situationist methods open up unexpected spatial situations which generate realities worth exploring. The Precarias' methods pursue an intentional model of the drift where spaces normally perceived as unconnected are linked. This allows everyday itineraries to become the leading line to follow, making visible underground realities otherwise off the radar for regular discourse. This version of the drift presented itself as a perfect technique,

attentive to the spatial-temporal continuum that they were experiencing as women under the new labor conditions. This project then contributed a methodology that could be understood as a feminist version of drifting, a kind of “*derive a la femme*.”

This innovative research methodology generates a political-economic analysis well-informed by current theoretical trends. Precarias’ project reviews, criticizes, rescues, and combines different bodies of work not by revering authority, but affectively.¹¹ Going back and forth between a variety of sources and their actual lived experience allows them to develop a *situated* investigation of the material conditions held in common and the radical differences being lived through.¹² These *feminist drifts* act as circuits articulating fragmented spaces and experimental tours that re-imagine the political as collective interventions in everyday life. They produce participatory cartographies of their collective itineraries, where field research is the temporary expedition following the space-time continuum of singular experiences.¹³ Precarias’ project is about searching for commonalities and fostering singularities, while maintaining the tension between them. They look for ways to articulate *lo común singular* (the singular in common), to cross-fertilize collective action among radically different specificities.

Bureau d'études/Université Tangente: Hacking cartographies to map power and imagine insurrections

Based in Strasbourg, France, this activist map-making group began around 1998. Its origins are in the radical art world of France at the time. Bureau d'études/Université Tangente (BE/UT) began to experiment with proto-versions of maps and flowcharts of economic networks as a form of public/political art. After several projects, frustration with the political economy of the art world grew. The organizing of the unemployed and squatters movements at the time took the efforts of the BE/UT into even more politically engaged art and work on issues of the “new economy” such as knowledge-work. Reflections on the changing nature of the economy, as well as the increasing prominence of global resistance movements and the calls to articulate a new sort of international solidarity, finally gave this kind of *artist* group a venue beyond the gallery/museum circuit and pushed the collective toward a long-term engagement with cartography as a way to work on and communicate issues related to the new movements. Large numbers of antagonistic maps, as well as accompanying texts, have been produced for radical analysis and education. These are distributed at counter-summits, No Border camps, Social Forums, communicated directly to local collectives (we picked our first map up at a squat in Barcelona), as well as on their website.¹⁴ Their maps and writings have inspired groups in many places to look into map-making as a form of intervention and tool for struggle.

So what are their maps about—and why maps anyway?

These cartographic representations are often an incredible and dizzying display of institutions, actors, personalities, organizations, and movements: a sort of network map tracing out the links and articulations of both “power structures” (the European Union [EU], global finance, particular corporations) and counterpower flows. For example, in one map called the “European Norm of World Production” one can see icons representing things like the European Commission, which connect to different banks, political institutions, and personalities. Flows of networked links show the associations among this institution and biotech regulations, defense industries, telecommunications, migration policing, etc.

Rather than a defeatist “power is everywhere, there’s nothing left to do” response, these maps evoke something else. In many of them, there is a multitude of targets and places where power is being exerted. In the Bureau’s work on “European Norms,” for example, instead of a vertical pyramid where real power exists at just one point, the very structuring of the EU’s quest for a neoliberal/imperial Europe is configured by a vast number of institutions, corporations, laws, etc. The configuration itself is the structure. Thus, there are dozens of possible fracture points: no one struggle is totally primary here. The map gives the impression of being unfinished, that some links are yet to be traced or understood—just as power is reforming itself and morphing in response to popular struggles. This appropriation of cartography provides new ways of thinking, new forms of antagonism, as well as the understanding that no institutions or “sites” of power are bound and self-contained in any simple way. Every powerful institution is made up of its links and flows with other forms of power.¹⁵ The Bureau d’études explains the importance of this type of movement-based research:

Autonomous knowledge can be constituted through the analysis of the way that complex *machines* function...The deconstruction of complex machines and their “decolonized” reconstruction can be carried out on all kinds of objects...In the same way as you deconstruct a program, you can also deconstruct the internal functioning of a government or an administration, a firm, or an industrial or financial group. On the basis of such a deconstruction, involving a precise identification of the operating principles of a given administration, or the links or networks between administrations, lobbies, businesses, etc., you can define modes of action or intervention.¹⁶

At the same time that power is mapped one can also follow the itineraries of movement activity with the goal of strengthening autonomous forms

of organizing, understanding distinct activist efforts together, or searching for new sites of resistance.

So tell us some more about maps.

These mapping strategies seemed relevant to carrying out militant research practices that were tuned to many activist principles. Based on what we've learned from the experiences of Bureau d'études and other mapping collectives we've tried to draw out some of the benefits of a social movement-based form of cartographic production in order to strengthen and deepen struggles.

Maps are nontextual and nongrammatical. This means that rather than a text or tract where the reader is forced to follow the author's train in a pretty linear way, maps have no rigid beginning or end. While maps definitely show some things while hiding others, they are not bound by the same rules of grammar and syntax. Different map viewers can see different links and orders of things, and can focus on any point of the map at any time without having to turn pages. This nontextual characteristic can also help bridge some constraints of language and literacy (though its hypervisuality may produce other limitations).

Maps are easier to produce or build on in a participatory and collective manner. While co-authoring a text for a collective of any significant size can be quite difficult—simply because sentences are hard to construct with lots of people—map items and icons can be added to in a much easier way. Different people can suggest different items that might be relevant for a map on, for example, a particular corporation, a set of labor relations, a part of the neighborhood, etc. Even when a map is finished, different users can draw on it, adding new items or connecting previously unconnected ones (just think of what one normally might do on a tourist or street map).

Maps are excellent tools for teach-ins and workshops. They are also practical devices for communication among struggles more generally. Partly this is facilitated by their visual nature, except that unlike a film, for instance, you might be able to view an entire map (or maps), and move your attention anywhere on them. This can change the flow of collective discussion and reflection and makes it easy to refer back to previous points.

Maps never need to be considered finished. As mentioned above, people can draw on them or draw new ones. Text boxes can be added. Different maps can be read in conjunction with one another in order to deepen analyses and look for more tools. For example, the Bureau d'études might have a map of different state institutions of governance which includes certain financial institutions, and another map about those financial institutions that follows their connections to other industries and companies.

Activist maps have already been used in many different ways. Sometimes

they look more like cartoons meant to communicate a point, a form of agit-prop or “propaganda map”—for instance, the image of an octopus crawling over the earth.¹⁷ Other activist maps are more like street maps for particular protests that designate things like targets, safe zones, and tactical areas.¹⁸ The maps called for here, and enacted by collectives such as the Bureau d'études, go even a step further. They are explicitly intended to apply movement politics to the map-making process, such that the form they take may be pretty funky and unorthodox. The goals are specifically to understand what forms of power we may be up against, as well as what counterpowers we may be able to create.

The maps become a part of activist “growth,” if you will. They can act as a way of linking daily experiences and itineraries to broader-scale configurations of economic and political power. It's at this point where we see the connection between the experiences of Precarias a la Deriva, Bureau d'études, and what we hope to enact through the “Mapping the Universities” project.

3. Back to School: An Emerging Activist Research Project at a US Knowledge Machine

For different economic, political, and personal reasons, some of us ended up studying and working at a university located in the jungles of the US South. What we perceived as the isolation of the ghettoized US academy was a source of frustration during the first years of our program. After conversations with others, though, we realized that the isolation was reinforced by the myth of the university as an ivory tower displaced from the “real world” as well as from “real activism.” As inhabitants of the university, it was not difficult to see how higher education institutions were contributing to the process of neoliberalization of the economy we'd been fighting all along.

For example, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill (UNC-CH) is one of about ten universities within a fifty-mile radius of North Carolina that provides the labor force to nearby Research Triangle Park, one of the main hubs of the worldwide knowledge economy, including many multinational corporations. The concentration of PhDs working in the geographical triangle formed by the three most important universities in the area is one of the highest in the world. This is accompanied by a rise in part-time service work under dubious conditions. Duke University is the third-largest private employer in North Carolina, just a bit behind Wal-Mart, and is referred to by local citizens of Durham as the “plantation.” This pole of economic production has replaced much of the textile industry, which is in the process of outsourcing after meeting WTO “standards.” Its corporate-driven agendas and casualized labor policies have been praised as one of the leading models of the neoliberalization of research.

The university, as one of the main actors of the current economy, is completely embedded within the “real world out there.” The university as such contributes to the production and reproduction of the same neoliberal world that many of us had been fighting on the “outside.” Thus, activism—commonly thought of in the US as having little to do with academia—was more necessary than ever at the heart of the university, in order to explore the shortcomings and possibilities of the system’s reproduction machines.

After looking into some of these questions, new activist research experiments, and debates on precarity, a working group emerged on campus focused on the cartographic strategies that movements were developing to interact with the changing economic situation. This group—under the temporary name of Counter-Cartographies Collective—has been meeting at 3 Cups, a slow-food business in town, since April 2005. The idea is to appropriate some of those techniques to trace out some of the economic shifts within our local area. One of 3C’s current projects focuses on mapping/driftng/intervening in the university machine. This project was inaugurated with the intervention on Labor Day.

As mentioned before, the examples of Bureau d’études and Precarias a la Deriva have fueled our imagination to start a cartographic activist research project at UNC-CH. These are some of the *translations* of the methodological contributions by both projects for mapping the university.

Drifting through the circuits of a post-Fordist factory

Among the university’s main taboo subjects, are the labor and life conditions of its workers. The university erases the bodies and the materiality involved in knowledge production. Service and infrastructural sectors, as well as academic work itself, are going through parallel processes of outsourcing, temporary contracting, self-managerial approaches and other “treats” of flexible labor markets. Precarity—manifested in multiple forms—presented itself at home. The post-Fordist regime of the knowledge economy was waiting to be researched and intervened in, and the methodological tools developed by Precarias a la Deriva fascinated us with their possibilities.

Feminist drifting as TAs, undergraduates, cafeteria workers, professors, janitors, adjuncts, ground keepers, etc. allows us to mark the territory of knowledge production as the object of examination, the object upon which to produce knowledge. Our everyday lives as university inhabitants have become our temporary field sites, appropriating our research skills to investigate our own labor/life conditions and explore the possibilities of struggle. The university always expects researchers to examine the outside, the real world out there, the far away, the other, the heterotopia. That very same university is made into our object of examination because of its important role in the making of economic, political, and cultural processes and their

intense connections with the supposedly “real world.” Our drifting will be made through the circuits of a post-Fordist/precarious university. Just as the Situationists found the city fascinating for its power of capturing contemporary processes, we, as temporary inhabitants of the university system, find our academic territory to be an incredible source of information on current production modes in the knowledge economy. Following the itineraries or circuits of each of our drifts would allow us to uncover the conditions for the university’s production of neoliberal subjects.

Drifting through the everyday circuits of labor at the university (knowledge, manual, and everything in between) opens the possibility to draw connections between individual experiences and larger processes in the current political economy. In addition to exposing these connections, it becomes a tool to explore the potential articulations within a situation of total fragmentation among the labor force of a changing US academy, overcoming radical occupational differences through common language—the knowledge factory—and hopefully opening a new terrain of struggle. Feminist drifting on campus would encompass collective field tours. Each drift can involve different recording devices (notebooks, video camera, audio tape). It is a kind of collective interview in motion, led by one/two/three guides through their everyday-life itineraries. The recorded drift may involve diary entries, interviews, discussions, etc. Afterward the material could be discussed in internal workshops. Some of the possible drifts identified by 3Cs are:

- drift 1: wandering through different TAs in order to understand the intersection/continuum of “student” and “worker”;
- drift 2: engaging the military presence on campus by conducting interviews and having collective discussions with combat veterans and soldiers on the political economy of the military/academic/industrial complex;
- drift 3: the world of the adjunct (temporary contracts, health insurance, and second jobs) is it possible to raise a family?;
- drift 4: drift through the world of outsourced food and corporate cafeteria construction;
- drift 5: cleaning your room, and the campus, as a way to highlight existing conditions of housekeepers and grounds crews (withheld pay, temp contracts, racialized hiring, etc.).

Mapping the networks of the knowledge machine

One of the main myths about the academy is the independent ivory tower, which reinforces its exclusivist role of knowledge-making, untouched by historical dynamics and free from possible turmoil. Contrary to this well-established myth, we can see the university as a gridded space crisscrossed

by intense relations of power: instead of a privileged, bounded ghetto, we see an interlocking system with multiple power and counterpower networks flowing through it. Both the conditions of current academic knowledge production and the possibilities of resistance within it relay into broader networks.

The maps á la Tangente—post-representational flow charts of both power and resistance—present themselves as a counter-device that enables us to denounce some of the university connections, and also to explore some of its hidden possibilities for struggle and articulation.

Mapping the university would require a series of cartographic representations to visualize each structural layer that traverses the knowledge machine. In a brainstorming session about the different networks of the university involved, 3Cs came up with a series of issues to be researched and mapped out: 1) employment numbers, kinds of contracts, and labor casualties; 2) links to the knowledge economy's development poles; 3) construction, urban restructuring, and gentrification effects; 4) diversity numbers and racialized spaces; 5) connections with the military industrial complex, including defense industry and foreign policy; 6) links to corporate power in research agendas and service industries on campus; 7) activist efforts and their targets; 8) links to immigration and security agencies; 9) loans, credit, and the connections with the world of credit as the basis for the American middle-class.

The Untrodden path

Through these various models of researching the university, the group is hoping to produce a multi-layered cartography in which several maps and itineraries would be superimposed and intertwined, exploring sites of contradiction and possible interventions.

These initial sketches of our as-of-yet uncharted interventions into the foundations of the post-Fordist knowledge economy bear the marks of influence from inspiring militant research projects. The irony is that these same projects, often developed at the edge of, or in antagonism with, the university, are now permeating its borders and contaminating its canons. The border between school and the "real world" must be breached since the ivory tower nowadays is only a metaphor for the defenses of these development poles of neoliberalism. The ivory towers are used as citadels in the newly conquered territories of the global economy, dotting our landscapes with sentinels/centurions of empire. They must be laid siege to, they must be infiltrated. As any good barbarian horde knows, a proper siege requires blueprints, and infiltration requires lived experience and adaptation.

But let us not fall solely into the militaristic metaphor. Inside the ivory tower lay tools of empowerment and communication amongst antagonistic

subjects of the future; inside the tower lay the archives of the same system that gave it birth, often including all sorts of critical analyses, all the better to empower the struggles of the horde; inside the tower lay their excess material, secret treasure rooms, their darkened corners, all sites where the barbarian infiltrators might spin a counter-web that will wrap itself around and overgrow the “tower,” replacing it with a new, as yet unmapped, territory.

Notes

- 1 For a complete account of the Labor Day action, see http://www.unc.edu/~macasas/labor_day_presentation_with_map.ppt
- 2 For many activists (whether working at a university or not) academia is seen solely as a “site of privilege” (as opposed to seeing it as a knowledge factory) and a place to get some individual resources (instead of collectively reappropriating its productive tools).
- 3 For some other examples of activist research that we have participated in, particularly from the US, see “Rebellious Research: Itinerarios por la investigación activista en EEUU” at www.euromovements.info. We wrote this piece for the *Activist Research Newsletter* in reaction to the absence of US experiences in some of the current debates on activist research. It includes examples like Chicago DAN, Mexico Solidarity Network, Participatory Action Research, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, and the University of the Poor.
- 4 See Desobediencia Global at <http://www.sindominio.net/unomada/desglobal> for more information about the Spanish presidency of the European Union in 2002, and the campaign against it.
- 5 For activist references on debates about precarity in Europe see www.precarity.info or www.euromayday.org
- 6 Precarias a la Deriva, *A la Deriva por los Circuitos de la Precariedad Femenina* (Madrid: Traficantes de Sueños, 2004), 48.
- 7 Lavapiés is a downtown neighborhood that has recently become well known for the confluence of youth, working-class and immigrant populations.
- 8 Precarias a la Deriva, *A la Deriva por los Circuitos de la Precariedad Femenina*, 21–22.
- 9 The translation of this term is very tricky: “feminine casualization,” “contingent women,” and “flexible girls” don’t capture it. In order to be consistent to the original meaning, then, we would like the reader to get acquainted to the Spanish terms.
- 10 Precarias a la Deriva, *A la Deriva por los Circuitos de la Precariedad Femenina*, 17.
- 11 Some of the work we engage with here come from neo-Marxist notions of affective labor, feminist debates on reproduction, postcolonial insights

- on taken-for-granted supremacies, poststructuralist theories of power, and Deleuzian understandings of subjectivity.
- 12 For example, an undocumented domestic worker and a freelance journalist are both flexible, temporary, part-time, and self-employed workers—however there are huge differences in social status, salary, rights, risks, etc.
 - 13 See cartographic representations of their drifts in Precarias' publication (2004).
 - 14 See Brian Holmes at <http://utangente.free.fr>
 - 15 Some of the Bureau's theoretical background seems to jive well with Foucault and Deleuze and Guattari. If interested, see examples of work by Brian Holmes.
 - 16 Bureau d'études-Université Tangente, "Autonomous Knowledge and Power in a Society without Affects," at the Université Tangente: www.utangente.free.fr
 - 17 See John Pickles, *A History of Spaces: Cartographic Reason, Mapping and the Geo-Coded world* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004).
 - 18 See the action-map "People's Guide to the National Republican Convention," (NYC, August-September 2004).