

Vulnerable Accumulation: Paige Sarlin
A Practical Guide

Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past.

—Karl Marx,

The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (1852)

Like thousands of other people in September and October of 2011, I watched Livestream video, followed status updates, and read articles from Occupy Wall Street. From a distance, I was able to glimpse how a range of alliances, activities and things accumulated as people aggregated and occupied spaces across the United States to express their anger at the system of structural inequality and policies being used to increase the gap between the rich and the rest of us. When I finally had a chance to go down to Zuccotti Park myself, many structures were already in place, from the General Assemblies to the lending library, from food production to poster-printing. As Josh MacPhee has already remarked, one extremely wondrous and important thing about the occupation of these spaces was the fact that they became public experiments in social reproduction.¹ More than just a mass outpouring of rage, the encampment at Zuccotti Park demonstrated that people can work together to build and run the social structures that we need to sustain ourselves and thrive in ways that vastly exceed mere survival.² However, both the virulence of police attacks on the spaces and the difficulties faced by the groups struggling to sustain these practices following the violent removal of the encampments point to another extremely important but underestimated aspect of these phenomena: the vulnerability of social and cultural experiments and movements aimed at political-economic change and social justice.

I have defined vulnerable accumulation elsewhere as a concept that “accounts for and incorporates both economic and affective registers in its description of the processes and activity involved in forms of sociality that arise between people experimenting with social forms outside or in opposition to market forces.”³ As a conceptual departure from what Karl Marx calls “primitive accumulation,” vulnerable accumulation can be understood as a “symptom of and response to the structural condition referred to as precarity,” although it also aims to make visible the historical continuities between structural inequality, social relations, and labour processes under capitalism.⁴ I first advanced this concept in an effort to further describe what takes place as part of attempts at what Jean-Luc Nancy has called “being-in-common:” collective endeavours and projects, political and social experiments, activist organizations, and affinity groups—forms of life that aim at the transformation of existing conditions.⁵ Like other aspects of social reproduction traditionally associated with “women’s work,” collective self-activity is simultaneously ubiquitous, overlooked, under-valued, and, in my estimation, under-theorized. The concept of “vulnerable accumulation” is thus my contribution to the ongoing theoretical work being done to describe, assess, and explain our collective experiences in ways that can lead to self-understanding and an increased ability to learn from our experiences and share our models and insights. The questions being posed and faced by movements such as Occupy point to the need for different ways to talk about political and social experiments. This brief essay develops the concept of “vulnerable accumulation” as a means of elaborating the practical implications of vulnerability and the attendant types of accumulation endemic to forms of experimental collectivity and collaboration.

Before I turn to a more concrete discussion of practice, it is important to mention that this theoretical work has developed from working and talking with others engaged in social and political movements and experiments in collectivity, and while

the narrative I provide below is my own attempt to inquire into our common conditions, I want to acknowledge the role of my own work with both the International Socialist Organization and the New York-based 16Beaver group as influential on this trajectory of inquiry.⁶

To understand our collective activities aimed at dismantling or overcoming capitalism, we have to understand which aspects of capitalist relations we *re*-produce in our efforts to produce, aggregate, and maintain counter-power. We cannot avoid a discussion of all the ways in which the surplus value and social relations produced by our labour become reified within the context of capitalism. Our activities constitute models; they create tracks; they make waves. But they are also immanently material and grounded. “Vulnerable accumulation” is a concept we can employ to name these processes and dynamics in order to outline a problematic that lurks beneath and inside the smooth, even idyllic, associations with the commons, and to be able to call attention to the excesses and limits of projects that harness the value of “unproductive” labour in the construction of new social formations. This concept thus calls attention to how and what our shared activity produces, in an effort to counteract and supplement the recent tendency to hide out in celebrations of spontaneity and conceptions of the immateriality or affective character of the “labour” or “work” of political organizing and collective activity.

One immediate problem is related to description and representation. The constitution of a “we” can only happen in and through language; it is always discursive, based in discussion and communication, and the problems of constituting this “we” are both internal and external. When we are talking about groups of people, questions about how to speak for or from a multitude or multiplicity—from a “we”—are never abstract. We can work to ensure that no one person can represent a group, take credit for its work, or claim ownership. In addition, decisions about the facilitation of internal discussions, including decisions about how many in the group may speak together



or to one another, are never politically neutral, even when they remain unstated. Questions about how to speak for or from a multiplicity, from a “we,” are thus pragmatic questions expressing a basic and unavoidable encounter with the structural conditions of life under capitalism. In the context of our work together, we struggle with the immense task of articulating *what we want*. But, having to talk about *what we are* and *what we do*, collectively, to a public or audience, to “others” not involved in our collective work, often pushes us toward the limits of our discourse. These encounters often force us to accept ossifications of our practice that we want to avoid: the force of language and habit, in the cultures of various art worlds and academia under neoliberal capitalism, that insist on the production of individual speaking “subjects,” identifiable authors, and owners—people who can take credit and wear name-tags.

In this regard, speaking from within or out of a social subjectivity (rather than an individual one) brings us face to face with the ideological and market forces against which we struggle, under which we labour, and in relation to which we are all at risk. These are the constraints that we exist and work *within*. When we place ourselves in alliance with one another to think otherwise, we also place ourselves in a position to see these pressures from other angles, to experience them differently, and to understand the common and collective dimensions of political-economic struggle. One popular term used to name the conditions that beset contemporary workers is “precarity.” The adjective “precarious” has been used to describe the condition of certain workers under capitalism since the late 1830s.⁷ But the term precarity was first utilized in the context of recent social movements in Europe as a description of a new position resulting from shifts in modes of production and global markets, with a distinct affective dimension and political potential.⁸ Used to identify a common experience amongst workers and immigrants in the 1990s and 2000s, as well as the dispossessed, unemployed, and under-employed, it was deployed tactically in an effort to bring people together in struggle. The

polyvalence of the term has been its hallmark as it has been taken up in cultural theory and academic discourse, simultaneously suggesting a new periodization of labour, describing different kinds of work, articulating a political subjectivity that acknowledges the affective dimensions of political life, and signaling a renewed appreciation of the significance of labour conditions for every aspect of our lives and cultures.⁹

As is well known, in the previous historical epoch in which the term precarious was employed, Marx used the term “accumulation” to explain what happens to the surplus value created by labour-power. Marx called attention to the various processes, dynamics, and interests that shape capital’s ongoing relation to both the means of production and those whose labour-power produces surplus value. Accumulation is not simply a neutral term for the hoarding of commodities or things; it is, for Marx, a process that happens over time but is simultaneous with production. Capitalist accumulation is both the end result of a particular mode of production and the basis for its maintenance, being the source from which the means of production are reproduced. Vulnerable accumulation is most visible in the mode of production associated with precarity and being-in-common, where social relations are explicitly the means and the result of production.¹⁰ Like Marx’s capitalist accumulation, through which capitalists accrue wealth and the reproduction of the power of capital is sustained, vulnerable accumulation describes processes that transform, produce, and maintain the particular forms of social relations most associated with precarious life under capitalism.

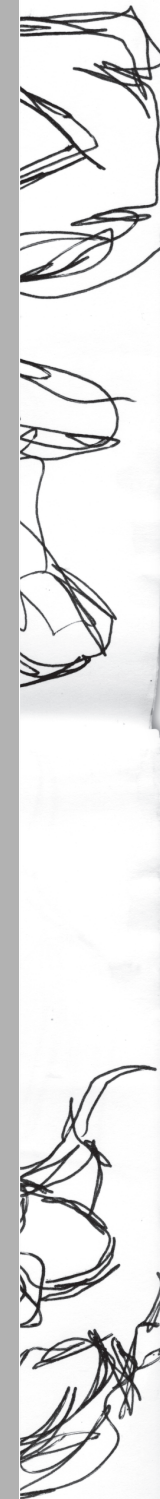
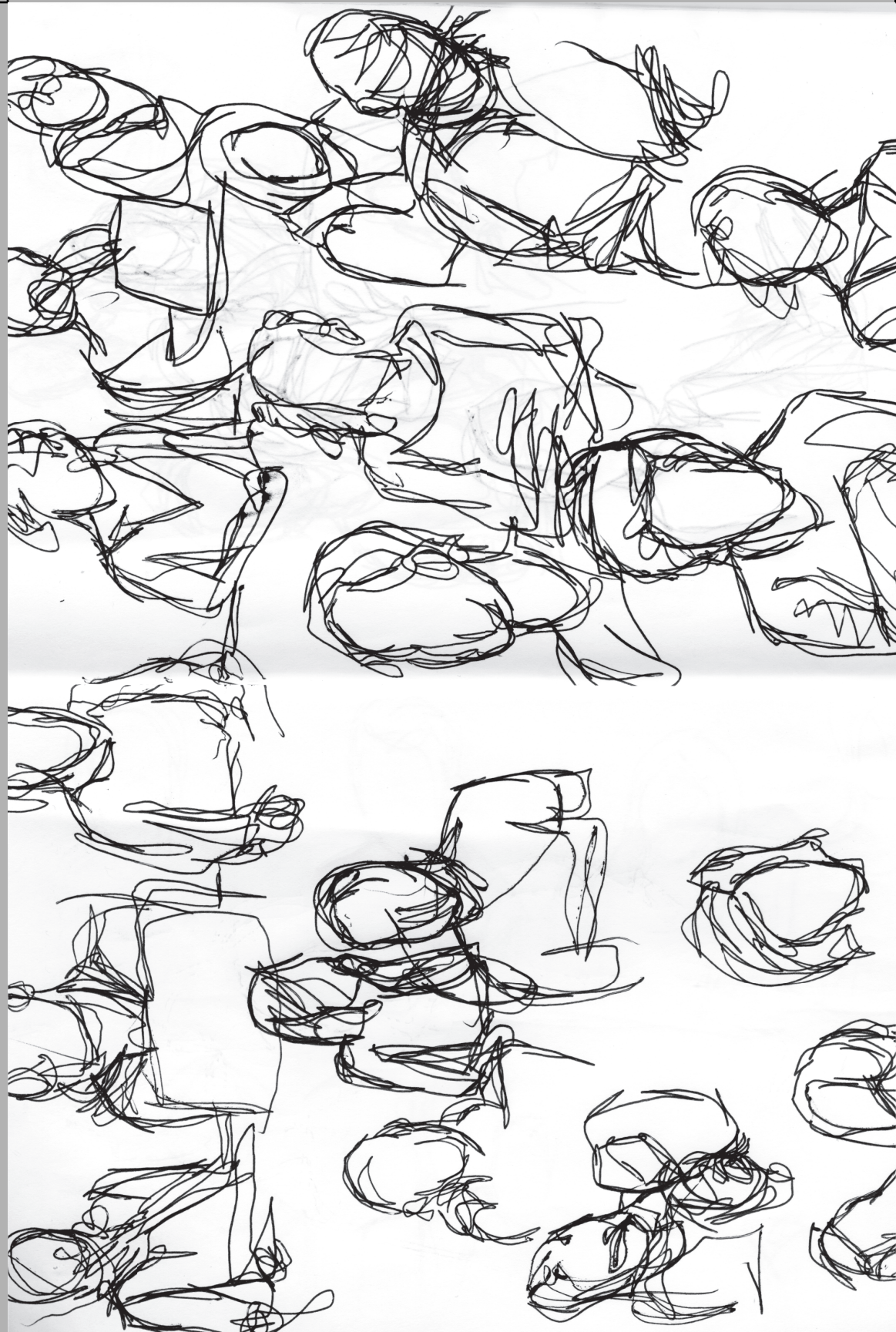
To appreciate how these conditions of precarity are articulated by vulnerable accumulation, it is also worth recalling the process of “so-called primitive accumulation.” According to Marx, this process destroyed the historical commons by creating capital through the entrenchment of private property—the establishment of the fundamental inequality of capitalism.¹¹ Outside the logic of the market, primitive accumulation took place through dispossession, aggregation, and enclosure.

As described by Marx in *Capital*:

The spoliation of the church’s property, the fraudulent alienation of the State domains, the robbery of the common lands, the usurpation of feudal and clan property, and its transformation into modern private property under circumstances of reckless terrorism, were just so many idyllic methods of primitive accumulation.¹²

Notably, for Marx, the processes of primitive accumulation laid the ground for the social force of the proletariat to emerge. More recent processes of “primitive accumulation” have since been elaborated by theorists to explain uneven and combined development, as well as the operations of colonialism and the drive to imperial war.¹³ David Harvey, in particular, has explained how structural inequality has intensified over the last 30 years with an increase in the concentration of wealth through what he calls “accumulation through dispossession.”¹⁴

Whereas historical primitive accumulation resulted in the destruction of the historical commons, according to the theorists Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, there are also two types of “commons” that have been made more apparent by our contemporary context in which capitalist accumulation has continued to increase the consolidation of wealth amongst fewer and fewer people.¹⁵ One refers to a set of shared material resources (bio-political, technological, or environmental). The second aspect of “the common,” to use their terminology, is based on the vitality of ideas and feelings that are created and shared through social practices; “the common” is thus comprised of the infinitely productive and creative capacity of humans working together, and it is widely reproducible and communicable as a result of contemporary communication technologies. Furthering Hardt and Negri’s conceptions, Massimo de Angelis argues that this common is basic to human activity, but in the context of struggle and in the face of social division, it emerges as the articulation of a desire for collectivity and the construction of alternative ways of being, social relations, and “value practices.” In this way, the commons is as much a “question/



problematic” as it is a practice or collection of resources.¹⁶ The common is constituted by the relations produced within and across the social, through cooperation and labour (which includes the protection and/or extraction of resources). And as such, the contemporary invocation of the common(s) refers to contradictory impulses and realities that are simultaneously neo-liberal, resistant, and potentially emancipatory, both grounded in capitalist relations and pointed towards their overcoming.

In response to these conceptions, Silvia Federici’s work questions the inevitability and givenness associated with these notions of the common(s) in an effort to emphasize the labour of social reproduction that grounds the production of both commons described by Hardt and Negri. Federici’s work focuses on the relation between primitive accumulation and the commons, between forms of accumulation and modes of resistance. And she details the persistence of primitive accumulation, charting its histories both within and outside of market economies, in an effort to demonstrate how the “new enclosures” of neoliberal capital have brought attention to alternative forms of governance based on sharing resources and the social relations born of resistance to dispossession.¹⁷ Her interventions also call our attention to the ways in which these “new commons” are neither new nor constitutive, but dependent on various forms of labour that are simultaneously reactive and pre-figurative.

Precarity and vulnerability are central to the “alternative,” or what Jason Read calls “revolutionary,” modes of primitive accumulation that ground these contemporary commons.¹⁸ Vulnerability is an unavoidable part of the structure and experience of collaborative social, political, and cultural production.¹⁹ It is also a characteristic of capitalist accumulation, as evinced by the financial crisis of 2008. But without the state sponsorship and military protection afforded the banks and private corporations, the activities and alliances of being-in-common operate under threat from various outsides at the same time that they pose a threat to some of those very same

forces. Also, vulnerabilities exist between and within the people inside these groups, and duration plays a significant role in the development of these internal and external dynamics. Over time, risk and vulnerability fluctuate in quantity and quality because experiments in being-together reflect their material origins and the amount of labour time invested in them.

Some theorists and practitioners may argue that there is no need to put a measure on these new formations, or to attempt to quantify what happens as a result of the sharing, exchange, and co-operation that occurs within these contexts. My contention is that naming the processes involved in the production of connection and community in order to see the affective and material consequences of these activities is crucial to political struggle. When left unnamed, these formations accrue a mythology that is readily susceptible to idealization and, as such, does not help us get further in our work of thinking and building alternative forms of life.

The financial crash of 2008 challenged many beliefs in market forces and brought the realities of economic instability to the fore. In fact, the global financial crisis has made more acute the structural weaknesses of over-production and accumulation while revealing and enacting the instability involved in the radical re-calibration of the very structures and measurements of value in society. In the face of this re-structuring, the need for different forms of social life has emerged. But it is crucial that we differentiate between forms of being-in-common that operate *as* a response to economic re-structuring and forms-of-life that are working to *formulate* a response from a place of being-in-common. These are distinct projects: within the context of the former, it remains possible to maintain loose bonds and leave things unsaid; with the latter, when working to construct a collective response, our vulnerabilities become manifest in different ways, and they operate differently in relation to forms of collective enunciation. When trying to decide on a course of action “as a group,” divisions emerge and the multiplicities of our experience and involvement become more

apparent. The differences in our investments in collaborative projects are temporal, monetary, emotional, and intellectual. This is important to recognize, especially because the vulnerability associated with a commons is usually described as being a result of the strength of externalities—of the forces that surround this alternative mode of being. But there is something structural that is vulnerable *within* these forms of connection, sociality, and labour, within being-in-common, which stems from the actual precarity of participants in these social experiments and struggles. While the politics of commoning may be grounded in the articulation of a desire for forms of life that are not determined by capitalist social relations, the constitution of new modes of being are still produced within those relations, shot through with the contradictions and habits conditioned by capitalism’s forces and divisions. The extent to which we can transform the quality of our relation to our creative capacities, our own labour-power, and our intellectual and aesthetic potentiality, continues to be dependent on the ever-increasing unpredictability of our capacity to sell our labour-power. In many examples of being-together, our vulnerability is also central to our productivity.

Meanwhile, most forms of commons are not valued for their vulnerability, existing so close to the threat of real violence.²⁰ In the case of work with 16Beaver, we are *not* talking about a physical or corporeal fragility or exposure, but rather a result of a particular kind of openness.²¹ We are vulnerable because what we do is not easily categorized; it is immaterial, tentative, and social. Our messiness, our lack of definition, has made us harder to pin down, less fixable. This has enabled our longevity and mobility, as well as our flexibility.²² It is what we value about ourselves and what some other people have celebrated (even as it frustrates curators and critics). But this amorphousness also makes us vulnerable because it can obscure and complicate various fissures that cannot be easily glossed over, such as political, racial, ethnic, gender, and class differences.

It is far too easy to theorize the operations of the commons

apart from its material basis in labour and vulnerability—but the place that the conceptual and experiential seem to meet is in an understanding that investment in these formulations and formations is precisely participation in a very precarious form of accumulation and an aggregation of vulnerability. Precarity is often described as the result of atomization; but the fact that vulnerabilities do not actually dissipate when precarious people come together seems important to emphasize. There is often a persistence of various weaknesses that happen in the context of collectivity and collaboration that are not unique to us. These forces and dynamics need to be addressed in ways that recognize their structural and productive aspects, the particular problems that they pose and about which we cannot afford to be vague.

In the processes of being-in-common, we accumulate many things. We accumulate so-called cultural capital, so-called intellectual and emotional capital, as well as alliances, allegiances, and even respect. We also amass experience, knowledge, skills, memories, friendships, correspondences, and trash. Some might say we even have expertise. We also accumulate debt: social, personal, and financial—real economies of debt. We also accumulate more than just financial debt in terms of the more personal responsibilities we owe to one another in terms of time, care, and intellectual labour. We are in debt to a whole range of collaborators, allies, and friends for their generosity with ideas, insights, questions, support, and many kinds of cultural production.

Debt operates as a kind of radical dispossession—the deprivation of stability, security, resources, and peace of mind; the absence of trust, ease, and freedom. It is a quintessential form of vulnerable accumulation, one that involves a kind of risk on the part of the “investor” but an even greater risk on the part of the debtor. Our vulnerability just radiates from it in every direction. If debt makes us more precarious, it also makes us anxious about precarity. As David Graeber’s recent work makes explicit, we cannot forget that debt, like the enclosure



of the commons, presages a tremendous amount of violence.²³ Debt created the conditions for slavery. Before the invention of the virtual credit system, a life, the body of a person, was often offered to repay a debt. In the context of wars and conflict, the price of losing has often resulted in the sacrifice of political freedoms, but it also produces other forms of debt. Structural Adjustment Programs were designed to impoverish people in countries that have national debts to international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. More recently, the devastating austerity measures in Greece, Italy, Spain, and Portugal have demonstrated the tremendous social costs of sovereign debt, a price being actively resisted by the people whom the debts have made even more vulnerable.

In these instances, debt is unmistakably a consequential form of social relation. But it is also a process, and a dynamic that can be thought of outside the realm of the State and the market.²⁴ It is often cast as a relation to the past, but it is also an activity of the present. And, even when it is historical, debt actively shapes the future. The problem with thinking about debt

and accumulation at all is that we immediately begin quantifying things: what were once spaces of hope, affect, or precise, local qualities quickly and necessarily become different in kind from themselves when the accounting (any accounting) is done. However, by thinking about debt as a process rather than as a *state* (as something we are *in*), it becomes possible to appreciate the sense of mobility, the activities, and labour of the commons, which are never solid *things*. In this context, debt is not just a process of divestment based on property/things; rather, it stems from the investment in and with other people that has the potential to bring us closer to one another and ourselves, to our creative abilities and social possibilities. To think of being-in-common as a process based in the accumulation of this kind of debt is to highlight the *process* of becoming that permeates social interactions, an accumulation created through the labour of “good will,” great intentions, and careful philosophizing—the great intelligence born of a group dynamic, and born in process, through activity and over time. But this process, too, is vulnerable: the more we learn from each other, the more we share, the more open to hurt and disappointment we become, as the stakes of our interactions grow. The work involved in this sort of sharing changes every part and aspect of those involved. This transformation exists far above the plane of the physical. It is a form of change that is hard to describe or quantify unless it is measured in terms of the effects it has had on individual *and* collective ideas and practices.

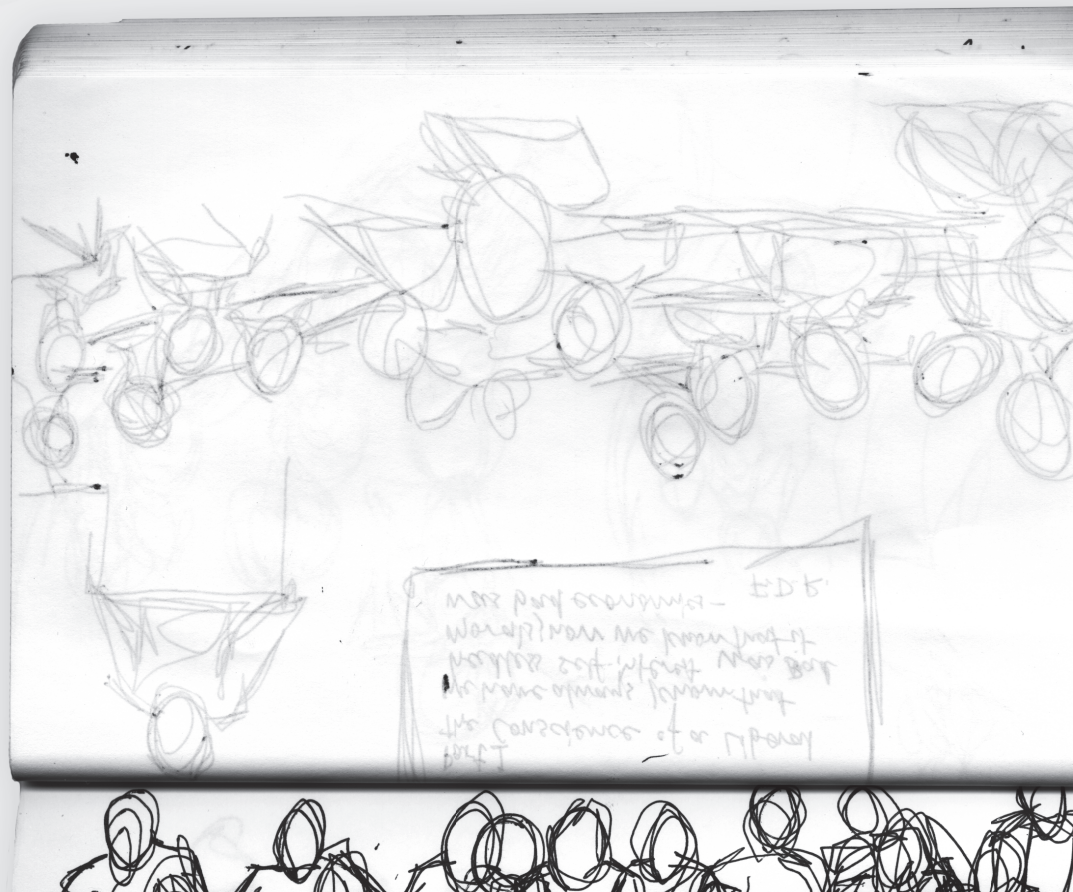
Without a structure of assessment and stock-taking, we run the risk of not being able to take responsibility for the successes and the failures of our activities, networks, and accomplishments. We will not be able to appreciate the strides we make. This is the other side of “debt:” the matter of credit. Like debt and all aspects of vulnerable accumulation, credit is something born of contradictory processes; it is both given and taken—simultaneously passive and active, gift and theft, bestowal and assertion, a form of acknowledgement and the product of labour, and of time spent. From a Marxist perspective, credit is thought

most usefully from the flip-side, in relation to the quantity of labour-time needed to produce or extract surplus value. In the case of these collective forms of life, credit accrues as a result of the duration of our interactions. It rivals the collection of our debts.

The language of credit concerns the ways in which that value is marshaled, represented, and exchanged. The credit produced from being-in-common describes the aggregation of credibility and authority; but it also refers to the claims of ownership that define the structure of private property. Born of a system that accords value to things and people in order to exchange them, the credit connected to the amassing of authority and linked to authorship operates as cultural capital. But to a great extent, the tensions created by the various forms of credit that these experiments produce make palpable the dynamics of vulnerable accumulation, indicating the presence of a thorny problematic that requires a way to characterize the activities and work of being-in-common in both economic and qualitative terms. In the case of experiments in collectivity, credit is often tied to the overcoming of external and internal vulnerability, of creativity, production, and persistence in the face of precarity and the absence of means or capital. But we should never stop by celebrating our abilities to make a “strength” out of a vulnerability. Far from superfluous, the severity of the conditions under which vulnerable accumulation occurs must be recognized. But there is *nothing* inevitable about vulnerable accumulation. The inequalities that necessitate it and ensure its ubiquity are *made*, not given; and neither are the activity and labour that produce and sustain experiments of being-in-common given. As a result, we need to give ourselves and each other “credit” for the vulnerabilities we carry and overcome in working together, which provide the source and impetus, the conditions that inspire or necessitate collective activities. The significance of these social experiments can only begin to gain currency when we pay attention to the ways in which internal and external vulnerabilities take shape, become visible, are

exposed and transformed, worked through in the process of being-in-common. The concept of vulnerable accumulation is my contribution to this urgent task.

Vulnerable accumulation is everywhere; I believe it has become easier to see because of the profound decline in class struggle over the last 30 years (especially in the United States). This appears to be changing—it is changing. But we are far from the high tide of the 1930s. And as class struggle continues to increase in the face of austerity, forms of vulnerable accumulation will continue to accrue alongside the aggregation of labour power, contributing to and modifying the struggle, highlighting the centrality of social reproduction, the labour of care and the production of ideas and social relations to structural transformation, and bringing to the fore contradictions of racism, xenophobia, sexism, homophobia, the barriers to unification and collective action.



CODA

As I was completing this essay, New York City's recovery from Hurricane Sandy entered its second week. The destruction and damage to people and property wrecked by the storm illustrates the profound vulnerability of ordinary people in the face of changing weather patterns and global warming. In the absence of governmental or city assistance, Occupy activists and community members started organizing to offer immediate support and aid to individuals and communities in need of all sorts of help. Stockpiles of food, clothes and supplies were collected. Working together, spaces were cleaned, medical attention provided, and information circulated. Facebook and other networks were used to spread the word, soliciting more contributions and asking for people to volunteer more of their time. The scale of these efforts and their effectiveness have garnered significant media attention, highlighting the "re-birth" of the movement, the re-activation of the networks and social connections at the same time that the absence of governmental infrastructure (or will) has demonstrated the inequities and criminal priorities of the system—the very injustices that brought people to Zuccotti Park 14 months ago. These self-organized activities will continue because the scale of devastation is tremendous, and the system is not designed to alleviate this suffering, but to produce more of it through exploitation and/or speculation. The grassroots response to Sandy also revealed some of the central contradictions that vulnerable accumulation both represents and seeks to answer, the excesses and limits of these social formations that need attention.

In times of crisis, mutual aid only underscores how much we need one another—how the de-funding of social services has made the city and people *more* vulnerable and less capable of withstanding or responding to these crises, and how social bonds and grassroots, rank-and-file solidarity are powerful. These activities not only spring up from material conditions but they also have material consequences. The ability to believe in people and to trust one another is truly valuable, but we

cannot delude ourselves into believing that this comportment can be leveraged directly toward the quantity of building materials needed for repairs, or toward access to the thousands of vacant apartments throughout the city. For something like that, we will need a movement that can articulate demands. I am hopeful that these seeds are sprouting amidst the work being done. I hear the call for a debt-strike issuing from these very same activists. ○

Images courtesy of Paige Sarlin.

ENDNOTES

- 1 MacPhee is a founding member of the print collective Just Seeds and an early participant in Occuprint. His insights about these events were conveyed to me and many others in conversation over the course of the fall.
- 2 Paige Sarlin and Heather Davis, “The Risk of a New Relationality: An Interview with Lauren Berlant and Michael Hardt,” *Reviews in Cultural Theory* (August 2012), <http://reviewsinculture.com/special-issue/review1.html>.
- 3 Paige Sarlin, “Vulnerable Accumulation,” *Reviews in Cultural Theory* (August 2012), <http://reviewsinculture.com/special-issue/review14.html>.
- 4 The above-mentioned earlier version of this essay was written in the form of a dictionary definition.
- 5 Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, trans. Peter Connor, Lisa Garbus, Michael Holland, and Simon Sawhney (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).
- 6 For more information about each of these groups, see <http://www.internationalsocialist.org> and <http://www.16beavergroup.org>.
- 7 One early use of the term can be found in Henry Mayhew’s letters, published in a London newspaper and later collected and published in four volumes in 1861–1862 as *London Labour and the London Poor: A Cyclopaedia of the Conditions and Earnings of Those That Will Work, Those That Cannot Work, and Those That Will Not Work*. Mayhew uses the adjective “precarious” to describe the instability of the labour market and the absence of “job security.” He first uses the term to describe the “living” of dockworkers. See Henry Mayhew, “Letter III: Friday, October 26, 1849,” in vol. 1 of *The Morning Chronicle Survey of Labour and Poor: The Metropolitan Districts* (Sussex: Caliban Books, 1980), 68.
- 8 Brett Neilson and Ned Rossiter, “Precarity as a Political Concept, or, Fordism as an Exception,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 25, no. 7–8 (2008): 51–72. Their breakdown of the history of the term is very instructive, as is their articulation of some of its weaknesses.
- 9 For my purposes, the best thinking about these intersections and their relation to political potential is found in the work of Lauren Berlant, particularly in *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).
- 10 Maurizio Lazarrato describes a “model of aesthetic production” in his essay “Immaterial Labor,” in *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, eds. Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 144. For a definition of “cognitariat,” see Franco “Bifo” Berardi, *Precarious Rhapsody: Semiocapitalism and the Pathologies of the Post-Alpha Generation* (London: Minor Compositions, 2009).
- 11 For a discussion of the role of primitive accumulation in relation to other regimes of property, see Shiri Pasternak, “Property in Three Registers,” in *Scapegoat: Architecture, Landscape, Political Economy* 00 (Fall 2010), 10–17.
- 12 Karl Marx *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, vol. 1, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 895.
- 13 See, for example, Ernest Mandel, *Late Capitalism* (New York: Verso Books, 1998).
- 14 See David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).
- 15 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2009).
- 16 Massimo De Angelis, *The Beginning of the History: Value Struggles and Global Capital* (London: Pluto Press, 2006), 238.
- 17 Silvia Federici, “Feminism and the Politics of the Commons in an Era of Primitive Accumulation,” in *Uses of a Whirlwind: Movement, Movements, and Contemporary Radical Currents in the United States*, eds. Craig Hughes, Stevie Peace, and Kevin Van Meter for the Team Colors Collective (Oakland: AK Press, 2010), 283–294.
- 18 Jason Read, “Primitive Accumulation: The Aleatory Foundation of Capitalism,” *Rethinking Marxism* 14, no. 2 (2002), 24–49.
- 19 See Lauren Berlant, “Thinking about Feeling Historical,” *Emotion, Space, and Society* 1, no. 1 (2008): 4.
- 20 As Judith Butler has clearly stated, vulnerability is unequally distributed across the world, and as a source for comparison it can help us to see how the operations of capital are affecting the lives of people differently. See Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2004), as well as Rosalyn Deutsche, *Hiroshima After Iraq: Three Studies in Art and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).
- 21 All forms of aggregation and accumulation are vulnerable under the force of the free market. What distinguishes one form from another are the institutions that exist to protect certain processes of accumulation. Under current conditions, the police and armies exist to protect capitalist accumulation and private property, whereas no such forces exist to defend seed banks or OccupyOakland unless they have been organized autonomously.
- 22 See Brian Holmes, *Hieroglyphs of the Future: Art and Politics in a Networked Era* (Paris: What, How and For Whom, 2002), 107–145.
- 23 David Graeber, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years* (New York: Melville House, 2011); see also “Coinage and Code: A Conversation with David Graeber,” in *Scapegoat: Architecture, Landscape, Political Economy* 02 (Winter 2011): 23–24.
- 24 Richard Dienst, *The Bonds of Debt: Borrowing Against the Common Good* (New York: Verso, 2011).

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