

IC-98 (originally 'Iconoclast', founded in 1998) aims to realize its objectives typically in collaborations, drawings, animations and books. The objectives are not programmatic, nor are the messages unequivocal – on the contrary, they are in constant movement towards the intersections of individual intuition and mutual agreements – the ideal is a free space of thought. IC-98 is interested in events, which did not take place, fantastic connections between things, heresies and pure systems of thought, the presence of history in everyday life, the body politic, social formations and architectural constructions, control mechanism and techniques of escaping them.

The medium of choice always follows strategically the context, its history and present situation, and the objectives in question. In practice, traditional research is combined with intuitive, subjective and personal considerations. The drawings, animations and books (the typical but not only mediums of choice) are ambiguous mashups constructed from diverse sources of information. They are stages or stagings, tableaux vivants, a theatre where the world according to IC-98 is played out. All IC-98 projects can be characterized as narrative constructs, blueprints of the possible or scripts for action. They try not to close on themselves but to act as condensations of diverse fluxes, both linguistic and affective – they open up to point something out or to bring something together, like expanded collages. IC-98 strives for an expressive quality, which retains traces of incompleteness, a process or becoming – it is a language but a language which stutters, which has obscurities and strange gaps, a cartography that escapes pure reason. In general, what IC-98 is after is the virtual.

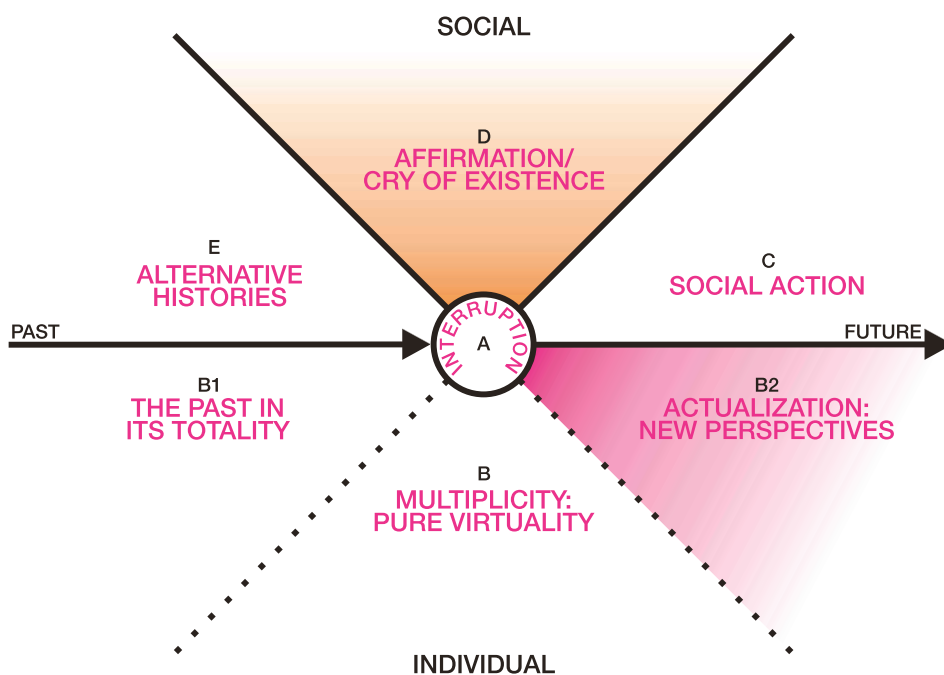
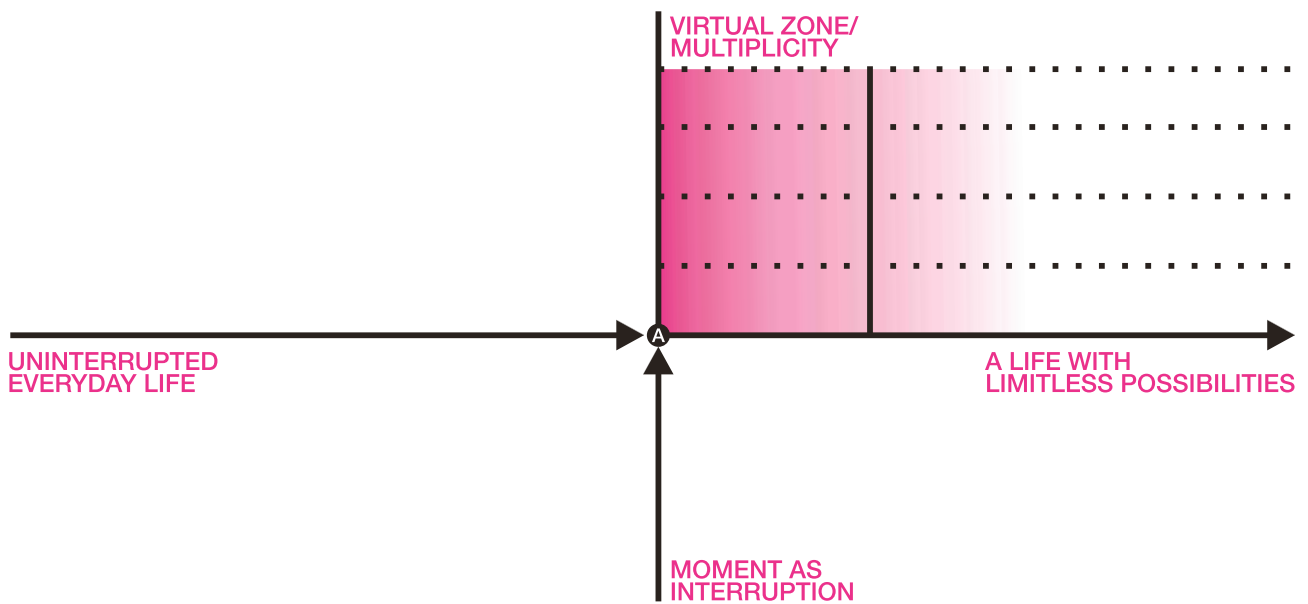
The ongoing series *Theses on the Body Politic* is an umbrella for all IC-98's activities. Most of the group's interest is directed towards the ways a society of living and thinking individual bodies organises itself. The organisation always contains heterogenous and contradictory elements: power, knowledge, passions, architecture and large technological systems. IC-98 asks: How the multitude is defined, how it defines itself in action and how it is put into work? What is the relationship of individuals and groups to a larger whole, be it the state, the market, or simply architectural space?



A Selection of Projects and Publications 1998-2011

Updated information, documentation of all projects, animations and pdf-versions of the IC-98 books at:
www.socialtoolbox.com

The methodological and theoretical starting point of IC-98 at the time of the foundation. Top: A diagram for *Psychogeographical Exercises* (2000/2001) depicting the constructed situation, based on the writings of Walter Benjamin, Gilles Deleuze and the Situationist International; Bottom: A diagram for *A Monument for Moments of the Living Present* (2002) showing what actually happens in the interruption constructed in the previous diagram. (Accompanying an article published in the exhibition catalogue *Transformer*, Teija Lammi (ed.). Pori Art Museum Publications 60: Pori 2002)



Introduction

When we founded the group in 1998, the idea was to make projects and interventions in public space. Previously, some of us had realised traditional art pieces, others done academic work. Now we wanted to take the projects to a wider, a more diverse public. Our theoretical basis was heavily influenced by Michel Foucault's and Gilles Deleuze's & Felix Guattari's critiques of power, knowledge, architecture and capitalism. Methodologically, we translated some of Deleuze's & Guattari's concepts into practise, and employed the ideas of The Situationist International: infiltration, intervention, *détournement*, *dérive*, psychogeography, the constructed situation, the actual and the virtual, multiplicity, the smooth and striated space. Our program was to create new tools and new frameworks for everyday life, to open up new possibilities. At this point, the stage for our activity was the city, a lived space and an architectural entity. Gradually, we adopted some of the basic concepts of phenomenology (Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty) to deepen the analysis of the (perceptual) experience of a body situated in space, and generalised this into a larger, social whole: the Body Politic. It is fair to say that we were making practical experiments based on idealist assumptions, and trying to connect the individual experience into a social framework. Since then, our interests and basic assumptions have remained basically the same, but we have largely abandoned one-dimensional (and often fashionable) interventions. Instead, we have drifted towards a more researched but increasingly metaphorical (even fable-like) expression. Our animations are a good example of this combination of context-specificity, research and the use of the metaphor.

(Free distribution) books

Over the years, we concentrated on (free distribution) books. Only in recent years the emphasis has shifted towards animations. The books are not documentation of our work but the work itself, heterogenous assemblages of texts, images, drawings, diagrams, instructions and exercises, composed around chosen themes, typically dictated by the context in question or by a strategic necessity. Sometimes the book stands alone, sometimes it is supported by an installation or other elements. Compared to public projects or interventions, a book is light, nomadic and easily distributed. When it becomes part of the multitude of printed material in public circulation, it loses its possible aura – and works on the same level as ideological and religious propaganda, educational material and advertising.

Our books are amalgamations of fact and fiction – they can be *read* as such, as stories. But they should also be *used* as portals and toolboxes. Or approached as scripts. Their meaning should open in use. For us, a book is an open construction, designed *for* something, not primarily a unity in itself. In this sense, a book as we see it is closer to a *manual*: it does not offer an image of the world but, on the contrary, is part of it.

It should not be regarded as a typical artist book, as it is mass produced and possibly distributed without a label of art. From literature it differs in the fact that it is collage-like, pragmatic, anonymous, and distributed outside the capitalist modes of exchange. The books are distributed for free, either in a museum, in a gallery or a public space – however, the “coding” of reception should kept to minimum. In the ideal situation, the manual would just be suddenly found. With a free and accidental mode of distribution, the book escapes the logic of capitalism: it is free of charge, outside the economy of monetary exchange, a gift which must not be returned. Thus it is democratic: its use does not require funds, technical skills or access to media. Even language skills are not necessary, as there are usually segments of narrative images and diagrams included. It can be carried in pocket – the reception takes place in lived

time, not in a specified space.

Typically, we include metaphorical drawings into the books. The drawings are an important part of our “writing”, not illustrations. They might be called illuminations, in a very broad sense. Despite of being tied to the context of the book they are included in, the drawings form a series of their own, *Theses on the Body Politic*.

In all honesty, it must be said that the principles outlined above are idealist and the actual use of books has changed over time. As the first ones emphasised the tool-function, the latter have been somewhere between fiction and non-fiction – and closer to the centres of the art world (which is often also a financial necessity). Distributing a book for free in a major exhibition (*Foucault's Sleep* in ARS 06) cannot be called very subversive. This we are ready to admit.

Theses on the Body Politic

Technically, the series *Theses on the Body Politic* is an umbrella for all of our activities – most of our interest is directed towards the ways a society of living and thinking individual bodies organises itself. The organisation always contains heterogenous and contradictory elements: power, knowledge, passions, architecture and large technological systems. We ask: How *the multitude* is defined, how it defines itself in action and how it is put into work? Thus we aim to depict, re-evaluate, explore or criticise dominant ideas and practises in contemporary society.

There are, however, singular projects that we have given the name *From the Series Theses on the Body Politic*. These are usually crystals of certain ideas (when our books are collages), realised in drawing, photography or video. The drawings in our books are also an important part of the series, although they are specifically made with the book in mind. As a general rule, *Theses on the Body Politic* is defined by the use of *metaphorical tableau*: the human bodies are in communication with each other and/or with the architecture. In these images, the human bodies are depicted both as part of the social and communal constellations and as units of large technological systems. The images can be regarded as independent artworks, but it is as important too see them as diagrams or dispositions, using bodies as building blocks. Typically, we have released these images as parts of our free distribution books – but also as postcards, in magazines and books.

So far, the animations have been depictions of the actions of the multitude: landscapes devoid of visible human bodies but at the same time completely formed by the human-machinic influence. The animations are more story-driven than the books (which leave the “seams” open). However, the animations are thoroughly researched and are usually presented with additional material: books, material from collaborators etc.

Drawings, books, animations

For us, drawing is not something personal, “a direct link between mind and paper”. We value registration over expression and concepts over composition. We do lots of research, both empirical (observing things, contexts and places) and archival (reading, going through archives, shops, flea markets etc.). Thus, our drawings and animations are amalgamations of our discussions and our research, ambiguous mashups constructed from diverse sources of information. They are stages or stagings, tableaux vivants, a theatre where the world according to us is played out. The drawings can be characterized as narrative constructs, blueprints of the possible or scripts for action. They don't close on themselves but act as condensations of diverse fluxes, both linguistic and affective – they open up to point something out or to bring something

together, like collages. However, we strive for certain anonymity, a streamlined coldness of style, which still retains traces of incompleteness, a process or becoming – it is a language but a language which stutters, which has obscurities and strange gaps, a cartography that escapes pure reason. In general, drawing for us is the art of the virtual: in drawing it is possible to create worlds. Drawing is not an end in itself. Instead, it is just another way of writing together.

In animations we produce from the same material a streamlined whole, a coherent story (without a language barrier that must always be tackled with in printed matter). An example of this method is the first part of our animation trilogy *Vicious Circles 1-3*. It was created for the Mänttä Contemporary Art Festival in Mänttä, Finland. We first travelled to the location of the exhibition to do research. We walked around aimlessly – a kind of a *dérive* in the Situationist sense – and investigated the archives of local institutions (historical museum, newspaper etc.). Back home, we combined all the material we gathered and produced the animation “The Giant of the Forest”. The animation can be watched without any prior knowledge of the history of Mänttä as the material is translated into a metaphorical level. Still, the whole of research is weaved into this cyclical story.

All our drawings and animations are part of the ongoing project *Theses on the Body Politic*. One of the fundamental ideas in the series has been the relationship of individuals and groups to a larger whole, be it the state, the market, or simply architectural space. The drawings have been metaphorical diagrams containing anonymous spaces and human bodies. In animations, we have so far omitted visible humans and depicted (natural) landscapes under human pressure. On empirical level, we are after the “metaphysics of everyday”. This empirical and intuitive cartography we then combine with “traditional” research, which typically contains everything from found objects to investigations into local micro-history – and then produce context based drawings, animations and books.

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