

What can collective action accomplish?

The Collective is an idea many groups have explored. This notion often falls short. Why? Frequently focusing most heavily on analyzing its own structure, 'The collective' is incomplete and commonly defined by those in it, rather than what they wish to accomplish. There are successful examples of The Collective, but that is because they use collective action to manifest their ideas. How does collective action differ from The Collective? The Collective denotes a specific group of people while collective action describes what is being done. Collective action can be deployed in many different structures while The Collective only works under specific conditions.

Beyond this, the basic notion of the Collective is sentimental and in itself, problematic. Individual participants are sometimes too consumed within their personal issues to work on more advanced ideas. In this situation, a healer, friend, or familial structure may be needed to support the individual. This manifests in many different ways including simple blind spots like inattentiveness and more severely drug addiction or alcoholism. No matter the severity of the issue, we find the demise of collective action inside. A work group must focus on its goals, not solving an individual's problems. That is not to say a person can become an ideal version of themselves, but at its worst the collective focuses solely on the personal dynamics of the people in it and fails to actualize. It is also essential to recognize The Collective is not automatically greater than the sum of its parts. It is easy to miss this concept within your own community. Individuals become too concerned with the sentimentality of having a Collective to recognize what, or who, limits its potential.

The Function of Transforming Space

A Transformed Space Event (TSE) can be loosely defined as any participatory, integrated presentation of creative formats (art, sound, sculpture, ideas, etc.). This 'total' creative format, reminiscent of the 'total theatre' of Dada and finding roots in Situationism, has permeated culture fairly deeply. The notion of transformed spaces influences a full gamut of events from underground gatherings to corporate expos. However, as we support some and critique others we should stop to ask an important question: fundamentally, what can the TSE achieve? Can we make a claim that these experiences have any more potential than a trip to the funhouse or zoo? The answer is found in what these scenarios actualize. We exist in a culture of standardized experience, constructed situations with well defined expectations and very little room for surprise. Does the TSE offer an opening into experience without expectation, and if so what is the productive function of such experience? Our answer to this question incorporates the following components.

I. Exploring Channels

Most fundamentally, transformed space explores channels of communication and relationships between ideas. To build a TSE, a creative group must make certain decisions about the nature of the event. What will the ambience of the space be and how will it be created? What kind of event will it be? Is it a dance party or a collective meal? As decisions are made, the people creating the event explore relationships between themselves, their practices, and the communities they come from. As certain channels are highlighted and formalized, they become foundations of the event's structure. Then, with all the variance brought by those who attend, the event changes from an artistic conception to an actualized moment in time. In the realtime experience of the event, participant's ideas and mental spaces are brought into a collective discourse with the event's structure serving as a set of guideposts. The subsequent occurrences map a geography of the psyche with respect to a community of people, i.e. the psycho-geography of a community.

II. The Limits of Personality and Identity

In a given situation, what is the limit of what an individual will appreciate or understand - and what is 'outside'? In practice, the limits of personality and identity are often easily pushed even though seemingly innocuous juxtapositions, for instance mixing musical genres or joining a set of game-like rules with a community meal. Extreme experience is also a common option: using sensory overloading or underloading to push the limits of an individual's perception. Both approaches exhibit fundamentally similar effects. Some people will incorporate what they are experiencing while others will reject it. The most productive experience will be for those who use this

Autonomy is a way to subvert these destructive patterns. To be an autonomous individual requires commitment to yourself. (Social awareness, good health, and cultivated skills are all essential). When dependent on others the strength of our collective action is less than its potential. To fully contribute to a work group we need to cultivate high functionality within ourselves.

Collective action can be used to accomplish many things. Community farms. Broadening perspectives about technology. General exploration of space and ideas. Productive discourse in the government. Creating community resources like libraries. Preserving oral history (or having one in the first place). As powerful individuals come together the amount and range of things accomplished expands exponentially but the foundation has to be in place. Without skilled, sensitive, autonomous individuals who have good health these ideas amount to little.

opportunity to break down some psychological or sociological barrier. This leads to fresh experience, a fertile ground for new social and mental connections. To achieve breakthroughs participants must exist in unfamiliar regions of experience, beyond default analyses. The TSE offers a rich platform for exploring these types of scenarios.

III. Hypermapping - The Practice of Making Connections

The third function of the TSE lies in creating a platform for the activity of 'hypermapping.' Loosely, this is shorthand for the practice of making connections, in effect creating a 'map' between experiences, objects, and/or people. More specifically, atop the platform of the TSE, hypermapping amounts to the spontaneous generation of new psycho/social geographies. Beyond the collective psychology of a community event and also beyond the exploration of personal boundaries lies the experience of creating new connections, adding new links in our mental and social maps. Using a specific TSE as a basis, the community of participants then goes beyond the constraints put in place by the event creators to make decisions that define what the event becomes. The situation is constructed, but not the experience - and how the event plays out becomes the hypermap that the collective participants will carry forward to understand what the event was. This spontaneously generated psycho/social geography takes the TSE into the realm of actualization, from transformed space to transforming space. All participants act to transform each other, creating a generative framework for future collaboration with implications far beyond the arts.

Conclusions

Exploring channels, pushing limits of personality and identity, and hypermapping naturally align themselves as a progression or cycle. The exploration of existing channels followed by a journey to the boundaries of those channels, and then the breakdown of barriers followed by the practice of creating new connections. These connections become the new psycho-geography of a community of people. The cycle is then repeated, allowing for analysis, evaluation, and most importantly improvement in our ways of life and decision making. This interplay allows manifestation of concepts contained not in one individual but shared between many, essentially externalizing and collectively exchanging community history and knowledge. While standardized events function mainly as consumer experiences with well defined effects and minimal innovation, the TSE offers a self-regenerating opening for productive community collaboration. Focus on how unique individual experience multiplies with the experience of others is paramount to the TSE, and defines its productive function.