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Care and Critical Action

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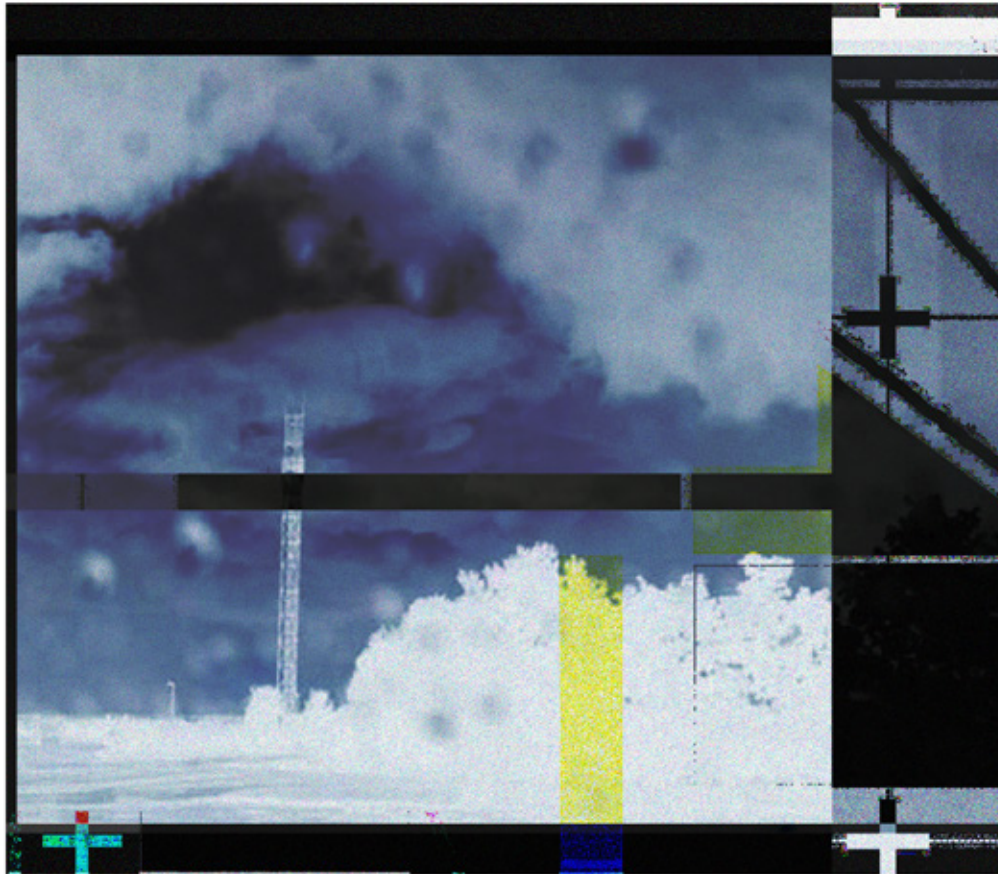
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Cameron McEwan & Nadia Bertolino

Afterword

Afterword

Cameron McEwan
Nadia Bertolino



Too often, care has been marginalised as a private concern, associated with women and minoritised groups—care work, caretaking, self-care, childcare. In her recent work titled *Anarchafeminism* (2022), Chiara Bottici advocates for an intersectional approach to create new social alliances, with the goal of liberating all living creatures from both capitalist exploitation and an androcentric politics of domination. In her position, care becomes a crucial tool for understanding how various forms of oppression intersect and for fostering anti-state practices of solidarity and resistance. In *The Human Condition* (1958), Hannah Arendt argued that care work is traditionally less valued than so called productive work. Arendt draws a distinction between “work,” understood as the productive process and making of artefacts; and “labour,” as the unproductive work of care necessary to produce and reproduce the world. In Arendt’s counter intuitive definition, work was public, labour was private, yet fundamental for living well. Care work is hard work, and for the most part, care is care of the other rather than self-care. It is care as a relation—family care, social care, care for, with and to others, for companionship, solidarity, play, support, learning. It is care for the spaces of the city, the public realm, everyday life, and care for the planet. Frequently, these forms of labour are labelled as “unproductive,” when in reality, they give rise to new forms of exchanges and alternative modes of communication, as Hardt pointed out in *Rethinking Marxism*.

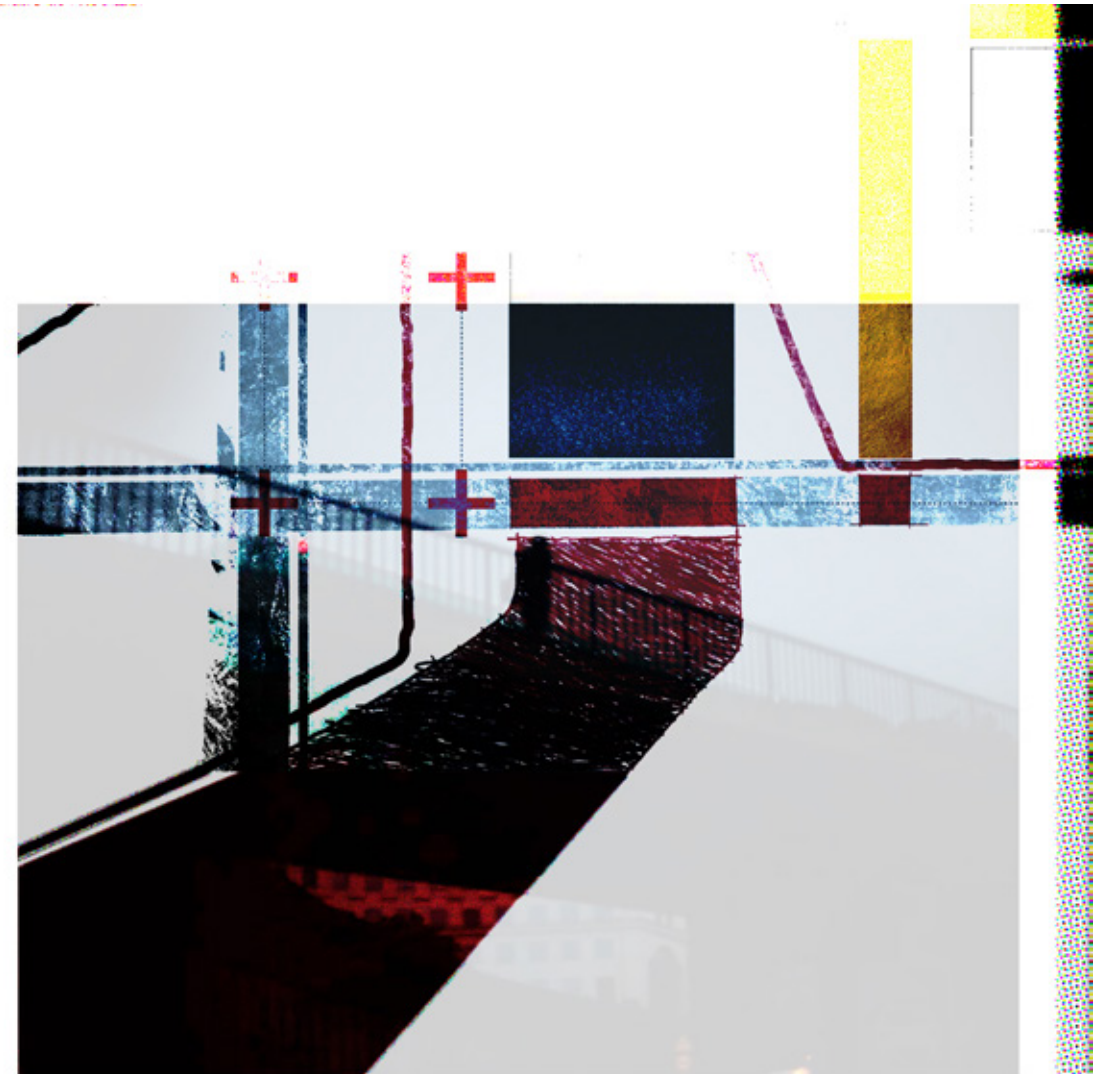
In an age marked by the fragility of democracy, the erosion of civic culture, and the abandonment of collective life, care for the other has vanished. It has been replaced by regressive forms of individualism, which undermines the social imagination and breaks apart civic institutions. As H el ene Frichot proposes in *Infrastructural Love* (2022), care is a relational approach, which creates links to and across pedagogy, practice, and theory. As Ellen Meiksins Wood argues in *Democracy Against Capitalism* (1995), democratic life is vulnerable and requires constant attention and reconfiguration. We argue that care as critical action, is one way to critique capitalist modes of spatial production and for thinking about how to live and act well.

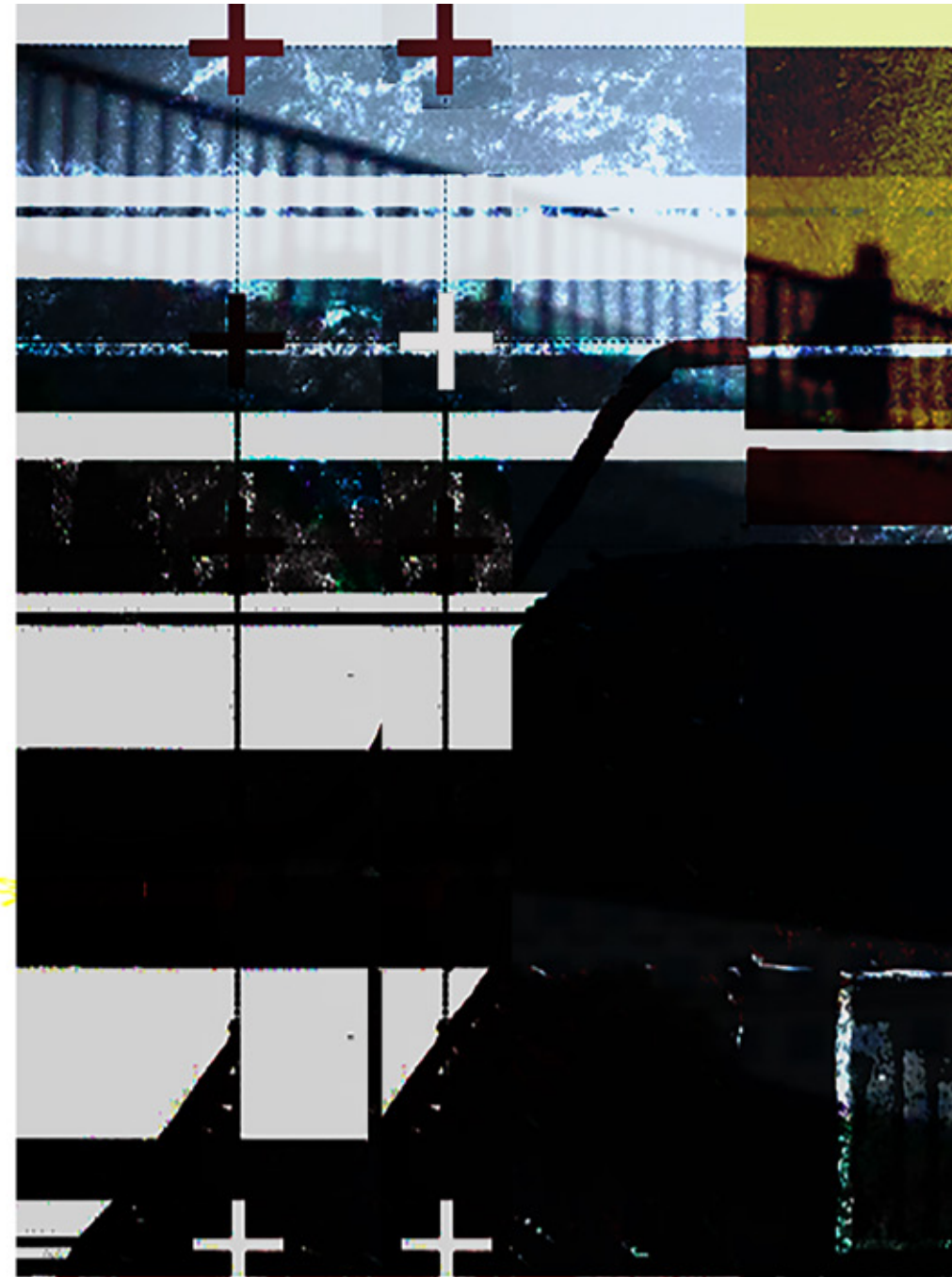
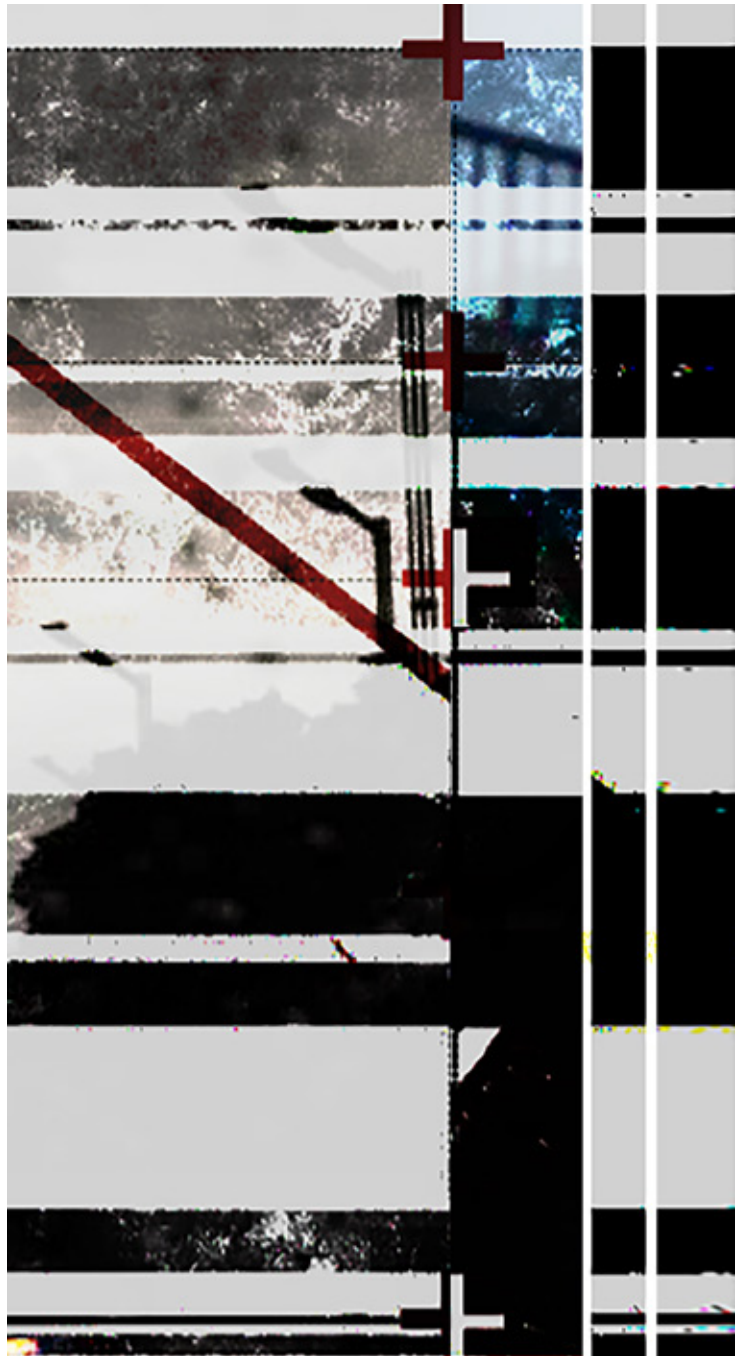
This issue brought together critiques of architecture and the city. It brought into dialogue the ethical discourse of care and spatial discourse of urbanism. It meant that care as a practice and principle, normally understood as individual, may be rethought relationally and collectively. It shifts the discourse. It means thinking about what are the typologies of care? The networks, hubs, staff rooms, and institutions; the fields, land, sites, and neighbourhoods that may act as places of care—for solidarity, reflection, or collaboration with others. We wanted to open questions of scale, thinking about micro institutions of care, for the planet, and care for the relations of critical thought.

Drawing on Hardt and Negri’s *Assembly* (2017), the positions presented in this issue offer a critical analysis of contemporary capitalism, which is shaped by various factors such as neoliberalism,

finance capital, nationalism, right-wing extremism, the common, co-operation, intersectional feminism, immaterial labour, digital domination, and mediated social struggles. Against capitalist forms of urban space, we need ways of thinking about, and making, alternative institutions and communities to connect to a broader struggle for a different collective life. We need a new language, vision, politics, and renewed sense of civic care that stretches from micro institutions to macro level transformation. We need spaces for critical thought and civic action. We need a social imagination that takes care for all others, the human, the other than human, the more than human. We need to articulate the centrality of care in shaping modes of agency, values, social relations, and future visions of collective life. We need to find ways for people to speak, write, create, play, and act from a position of empowerment and be responsible to themselves and care for others.

Against prevailing depoliticization, there is a need for modes of care that provide a link that may start at a micro level institution—the drinking fountain, the speakers corner, the gig workers staff room—but becomes constantly amplified. It would be to articulate the body as infrastructure; and create the social and spatial infrastructures to care for our bodies. It would be to care—with others. Such bridging work may articulate what Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau once called “a chain of equivalence.” Care as critical action becomes a method and a principle in the framework of care that we aimed to articulate here.





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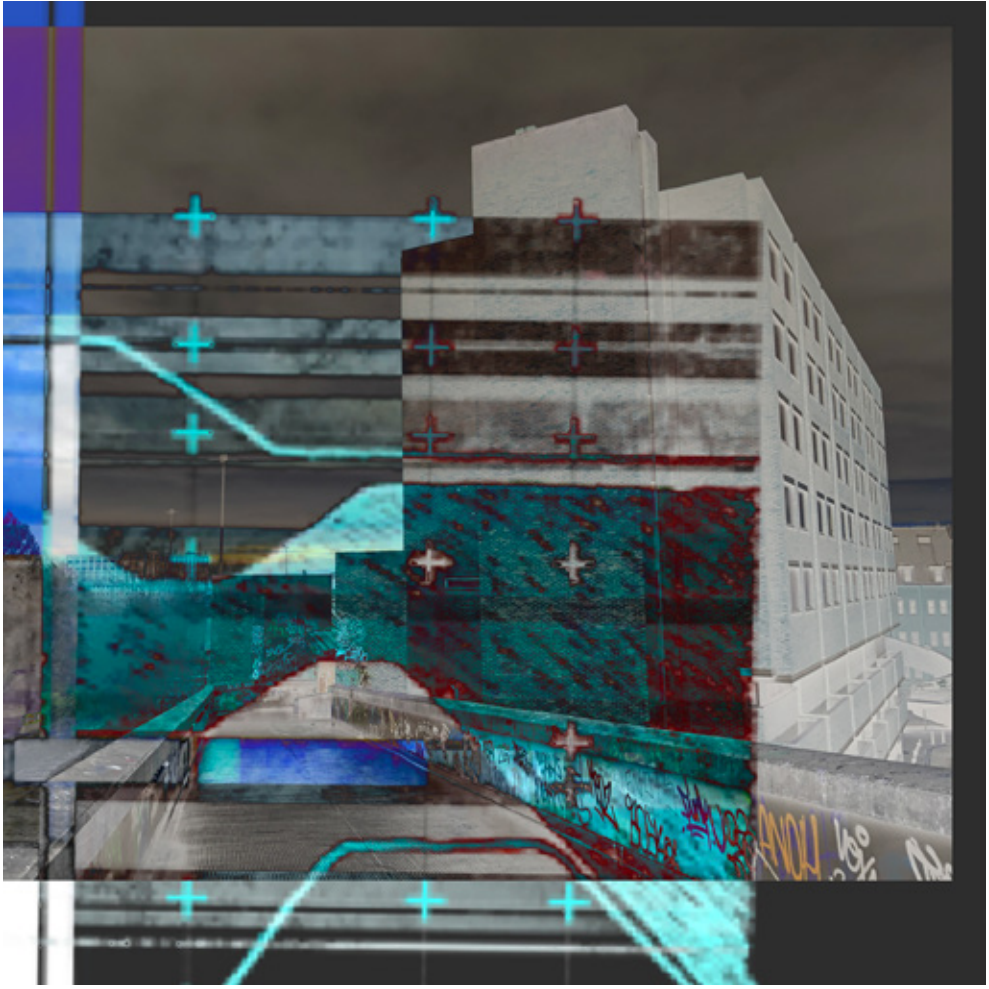
Guest Artist // Patrizio Martinelli

Io Squaderno is a project by Andrea Mubi Brighenti, Cristina Mattiucci & Andrea Pavoni.

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Glossy Urban Dystopias

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