

Purpose of Memos

The purpose of these memos is to provide a space for reflection while archiving the ideas and key themes that occurred during the workshops. The Zoom breakout rooms with one-on-one conversations are not included in the recordings provided on the Research Catalogue, and these memos provide insight to those conversations and link them to the larger group conversations as well as additional resources and texts read during my research assistant (RA) position. These writings are works in progress, allowing the space for updates, edits, and feedback. Please feel free to add comments and questions throughout the document.

Refer to timestamp

Workshop A1

In our first workshop, we attempted to get to know each other without doing standard professional introductions in the hopes that this may widen the potential of our conversations

WorkshopA2

In workshop A2, participants were prompted to bring objects which are to be used to activate an embodied activity. In smaller groups, we are asked to share this object and its significance practically or symbolically. From jewelry, to books, to hats, to blankets, each participant's choice in object was unique from one another and their way of engaging with its potential for structuring activity. My breakout room counterpart and I found ourselves interested in theoretical aspects of our objects, and as a result took longer to develop an embodied practice with them. When we eventually did develop an exercise, it felt rather cerebral and counter to the task at hand, and yet it was what sprung most naturally out of our conversation, objections, and mutual interests. Other breakout sessions seemed to come up with relatively complex exercises very quickly, finding a stronger interest in the functionality of these objects than in their sentimental value or meaning.

An interesting component of developing physical activities on zoom was the digital component that naturally found its way into the practice. One participant brought a ball as an object, and suggested an exercise wherein we all called each other's names and “threw” the ball through the screen to one another simulating a game of circle toss and catch. My research assistant partner, Justice, and I have spoken about how energized we feel after PSI workshops, and this ball activity was an example of the nature of them which grants their participants with energy. Though a simple experience, toss and catch is a form of play we are all familiar with. It causes us to laugh and smile, while under the surface we ponder the differences between being in a physical space together and simulating physical space activities in the digital realm. Just after this activity, a participant whose object was a blanket, asked that we all “wrap ourselves” in a blanket for 30 seconds with our eyes closed. This activity could not have been in more direct polarity to that which preceded it, as it asked us to perform a ritual that for most, happens in a space of privacy - the home. The split consciousness of zoom gathering whether it be professional or social is revealed here. While it feels unconventional in the zoom space to wrap

yourself up in a blanket, close your eyes and feel the comforts of home, the physical reality is that most of us are at home in the most appropriate place imaginable to have this experience.

If we are interested in experience as research, in the first person as a viable source of “legitimate” knowledge, these kinds of experiences and embodied activities are invaluable. After we all performed this wrapping activity, everyone shared the thoughts that emerged from the experience. While some thought of being warm, surrounded by loved ones or pets, some started to count to 30 with an explanation that they are “an instructional person”. This structure, where one is asked to perform a simple task and then describe the experience with sincerity, is revealing. It seems so simple, but frank description of felt tasks helps us to understand personal consciousness. It is after all a culmination of mundane feelings and actions which make up our interaction with the outside world and as such, our performance inside it.

Workshop A3

In workshop A3, we looked specifically at how we might imagine our ideal roles in organizations in order to collectively imagine an organization of our own. After workshops one and two, wherein participants expressed their more theoretical ideas about their roles in respective workplaces or artistic practices, it was fascinating to see how these same ideals might organize and materialize. Additionally, it felt liberating to imagine the ideal rather than critique the existing. So often in my work as a graduate student in policy, I find that reimagining is primarily done with a practical criticality. This lens is important for obvious reasons, one of which is the idea that as policy makers we will be practically enacting any philosophical solutions we develop in our time as students. However, this activity opened my mind to the possibility of imagining utopia and working backwards from it, rather than always working in a place of reality, presence and criticality. Perhaps as administrators, policy makers, students, and people interested in reformation of our existing institutions it would be wise to consider our stamina in working with criticality, meaning we may benefit from whimsical imagination and entertaining our own creative ideals. In [From Criticism to Critique to Criticality](#) Iris Rogoff spoke about the emergence of criticality as a new mode for intellectual and structural progress in the art world. Most relevant to our final workshop as I experienced it was Rogoff's description of what it means to read theory, in which they detailed the experience of unknowing so as to know in a different, deeper, more truthful, or simply reconstructed way. Criticality cannot exist without an experience from the inside out, and feedback loops which comprise our initial knowledge, or bias, cannot be broken without first person experience and its theoretical deconstruction.

Opinions on the reform to abolition spectrum among this group are broad, and in tandem it seems individual's formative experiences with institutionalized learning and other forms of

organization authority differ greatly. It was fascinating to observe how devoted we seem to be to our current institutional and organizational structures. It's not that as participants we don't find mutual interest in reform or in some cases, abolition of institutional power, but rather that we find ourselves gravitating towards the comfort of their sameness. I also sensed that many participants engaged in academia, whether as a student, employee, or professor, seem to have hesitations about "biting the hand that feeds them". Some participants even had trouble addressing the task of imagining an ideal role without retreating to irony, which is a feeling I myself struggle to combat while selecting avenues for moving forward in a task such as this.

During our breakout sessions, Rumen suggested a book called *The Undercommons*, which seems to present a somewhat scathing critique of the present in general, specifically academia and policy. Most interesting to me about the prospect of the ideas in this book as well as Rumen's choice to suggest it is the idea that a social space is a place where we truly "study". What have our series of workshops been, but exactly this space? While each participant has their own vivid and developed understanding of and positionality in academia and its respective organizations or institutions, we all seem to share this common ideal: the social space as fertile ground for new ideas, for productive change, and for exciting intellectual growth.