

COLLECTIVE INFRASTRUCTURES IN MOVING IMAGES

**YOU'LL
NEVER
WORK
ALONE**

**EDITED BY THE GOLDEN PIXEL COOPERATIVE:
ENAR DE DIOS RODRÍGUEZ
NATHALIE KOGER
MONA SCHWITZER**

**SCHLEBRÜGGE.EDITOR
VERLAG FÜR ZEITGENÖSSISCHE KUNST, ARCHITEKTUR, DESIGN & THEORIE**

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EDITORIAL

**THE GOLDEN PIXEL COOPERATIVE:
ENAR DE DIOS RODRÍGUEZ
NATHALIE KOGER
MONA SCHWITZER**

*You'll Never Work Alone:*¹ *Collective Infrastructures in Moving Images* demonstrates the possibilities and challenges inherent in collective cinematic and artistic work by presenting international and local perspectives from academics and practitioners. By linking practical examples and film theory approaches from Athens, Jakarta, London, Madrid, Paris, Rome, and Vienna, we aim to initiate an exchange of ideas on collective modes of production. The essays contribute to the historiography of collectives, to the writing of their own micro-histories, and to the empowerment of artistic communities. Moving image culture serves as an educational opportunity and a source of insight that brings together intersectional perspectives.

The publication gathers together further reading and responses related to the event series “Collective Infrastructures,” hosted by The Golden Pixel Cooperative (GPC) in 2019. The speakers who traveled to Vienna for these events have taken up themes from its lectures and screenings and elaborated upon them in essays. The authors include members of the GPC as well as Viennese and international next-generation academics, artists, curators, and culture mediators. The essays are complemented by a contribution from the transdisciplinary Indonesian collective ruangrupa, as well as a written exchange about Medienwerkstatt Wien, where the event series took place.

In curating “Collective Infrastructures,” the GPC borrowed the idea of considering collectivity as infrastructure established in Judith Butler’s 2015 book *Notes Towards a Performative Theory of Assembly*. The focus lies on specific infrastructure—social, material, visionary—of a collective association that has evolved or could evolve together through a community’s practice.

The occasion for this discussion is the expansion of The Golden Pixel Cooperative collective and the attendant question of what a community of cultural workers (artists, filmmakers, as well as art and culture mediators) can achieve

for each individual member and for the public—also what forms of collective thinking, organizing, and development this is based on.

Since the founding of the association in 2014, The Golden Pixel Cooperative, together with its members and local as well as international guests, has tested, revised, and further developed various public events and production programs. One of the first series of events, “Bleiben wir realistisch” (2016), represented a programmatic approach to documentarisms in digital imagery. This was entirely in keeping with the spirit of the name Golden Pixel, which stands for an irresolvable contradiction: a continuous preoccupation with the irreproducible (gold) and the arbitrarily malleable (pixel). The cooperative has since realized live and online screenings, workshops and artist talks, symposia, lecture series, exhibition formats, the GPC Lab and the GPC Portfolio, the general newsletter and the New Works newsletter, as well as collective artistic projects and various event series. This has also led to networking with various institutional partners and increasing invitations to participate in artistic, curatorial, and art mediation projects. A recurring motif in the various programs is the examination of different forms of documentary filmmaking, whether of a conceptual, collective, or essayistic nature.

The new home GPC found in 2019 with Medienwerkstatt Wien (the cooperative had previously been nomadic, with no premises of its own), as well as the establishment there of an editing suite funded by the City of Vienna and a lab program to support the production of artistic works, will enable the cooperative to provide resources to outside artists. A growing internal discussion regarding diversity and anti-discriminatory positioning has inspired an ongoing critical discourse within the association.

A community is always made up of individuals who share common interests. We are interested, on the one hand, in establishing infrastructure for exchange and cooperation, and, on

the other hand, in creating space to make specific cultural/artistic work and visions possible. Likewise, we are interested in generating situations in which relevant questions and discourses for the future can be discussed, or common structures for implementation can be developed. The basis for a collective is the willingness to share resources, ideas, processes, and networks, and to engage in critical self-reflection.

The first contribution to this international reflection on collective infrastructure comes from **Théo Deliyannis**. In his text subtitled “A Certain History of Experimental French Cinema,” he describes the cooperative model of the Parisian Collectif Jeune Cinéma. Established 50 years ago following the lead of New York’s Film-Makers’ Coop, it is Europe’s oldest film cooperative. Its history is inscribed in that of French experimental film; the founding of the collective was consequently contextualized in the experimental filmmaking of 1970s France. As a paid employee of the organization, Deliyannis’ contribution addresses what he calls a micro-history, that is, the history of its funding, organization, and the involvement of individual participants. He describes the changes in the structure over time as it evolved from a self-organized film collective to a subsidized distribution operation with employees. The text highlights the structural and pragmatic issues facing collective organizations and the tensions that arise between self-organized volunteer work on the one hand, and a funded structure on the other.

In a dialogue on the “Artistic Beginnings of a Collective,” **Mona Schwitzer** delves into the artists’ collective Medienwerkstatt Wien, which has been an important point of reference for the Viennese and Austrian media art scene for over forty years. Together with **Gerda Lampalzer**, she traces its progress from its early years to important collective art projects, such as *Volks stöhnende Knochenchau* (1980), *Wossea Mtotom—Die Wiese ist grün im Garten von Wiltz* (1984), or *Küchengespräche mit Rebellinnen* (1984). At the same time, the evolution of the Medienwerkstatt

as it exists today is reflected within a historical frame of reference. This development took place through the buildup of participatory alternative media audiences, media education collaborations in a local context, and cooperation with marginalized groups. It has grown from a media center into a media workshop and an artistic-documentary production collective. Until today, the Medienwerkstatt serves on a variety of levels as a setting for discourse and as a juncture for the convening of artistic practice and media theory.

After the historical accounts of the previous long-lasting moving image collectives, one question is raised: Can collective artistic practices constitute a political path towards emancipatory socio-political changes? The text “Collective Image Production as an Emancipatory Feminist Strategy: the Examples of Scuola senza fine and Precarias a la deriva” by **Jul Tirlor** answers this question with a resounding yes. Her first example is an initiative formed in the ’70s in the context of an educational program in which working class women were able to formulate a political voice through their artistic expression, focusing on their personal experiences and aided by a filmmaker’s expertise. In Tirlor’s second example, emerging during the 2002 general strike in Madrid, a Spanish film initiative was formed with the aim of explicitly addressing precarious working and living conditions among women. In both cases, collective filmmaking was used as a form of self-empowerment that enabled the establishment of networks, the possibility of being heard, and the resultant attention to and improvement of their own situation. Besides the collective audiovisual outcomes—a 16 mm film and video or audio recordings—these two initiatives produced shared knowledge and practical strategies that fostered emancipatory feminist tools against labor precariousness, sexism, and racism.

A different approach to articulate the complex history of a cooperative, and the diversity of its members’ views on that history, is the collec-

tively written text “Visions of a Common Place” by the members of **The Golden Pixel Cooperative**. Shaped as a filmic script that could be described as “serious fiction,” the text maps out different moments in the timeline of this Vienna-based association for moving images, arts, and media: from the moment of its founding in 2014, passing through important stages of its joint development, decisive artistic projects, and collective decisions, as well as the possibilities of collective work in the future. Reading between the lines of the chosen scenes, or actually imagining them, reveals the collective efforts of this cooperative to establish a sustainable structure for the distribution, production, and mediation of moving image works by contemporary artists, as well as for exchanges between artists, thinkers, and cultural workers.

Resonating with the development of emancipatory tools from a collective endeavor, **ruangrupa** discusses different perspectives on collective artistic work and traces the origins of the collective in a written interview with **Nathalie Koger**. The members of ruangrupa, founded in Jakarta in 2000, reflect on how the political situation in Indonesia created an increased need for a collective as a means of self-empowerment for students. They also describe which folk traditions, such as that of the assembly, their practices are linked to. They consequently draw from years of collaboration and coexistence among the members of ruangrupa to outline an economic model based on resource sharing—be it of ideas, tools, equipment, spaces, networks, friendship, or family. In doing so, they underscore the necessity of a future institutional turn. This implies that empowerment is possible through an expanded network of collaboration and cooperation based on non-hierarchical exchange. Furthermore, they link this to the general significance of collectivity in Indonesia and what images of artists and their psyches it serves to cultivate. They summarize this in the sentence “Space creates ecosystems for collectives and ruins the ego-system.”

The Greek experimental film group KINE is another good example of how framework conditions can be collective and self-designed in order to maintain an independent and self-determined position. Drawing from interviews and personal archives of a cooperative that has ceased to exist, **Eleni Michaelidi** dove into KINE’s history for her contribution to this publication. Her aim was not just to write about the actions and events produced in Athens between 2001 and 2013 by a group of friends who loved films, but also to reflect on the power of those stories, which too often remain unwritten. While many cooperatives emerge as a self-sustaining form of support and sharing of resources, the collective KINE also succeeded in developing a common aesthetic position. This was expressed in a special film mediation aesthetic that accompanied screenings at unconventional venues with hand-printed posters, handwritten programs, and graphic works. Furthermore, their screenings of self-produced and international experimental films existed outside institutional structures, allowing cinematic experiences in a different context—one that is ephemeral, unconventional, and exposed to its surroundings.

On the other side of the coin of ephemerality remains the question of the archive and how to keep the archiving of filmic materials both as an autonomous and collective practice. One model is the London-based non-profit organization **Cinenova**. Formed in 2001 and composed of volunteers, Cinenova carefully maintains an extensive collection of films with a focus on history and politics from a feminist and de-colonial perspective. For Cinenova, the distribution of their collection “has been a process of re-contextualising and reflecting on distribution from the angles of politics, desire and contingency, rather than sticking to performing a delegated authority (‘on behalf of’), which the distribution contract implies.” Taking this approach, they put emphasis not only on the caring of each individual work in their collection but, more importantly, on their distribution as programming—or programming