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**Generation M.
Matter, Makers, Microbiomes:
Compost for Gaia**

***Generación M.
Materia, creadores y microbioma: compost para Gaia***

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ABSTRACT

Language, information and the virtual space were distinctive features of the previous generation. Making, matter and the fusion of the digital and the material are defining generation M, the first generation of the 21st century. This essay explores the material, social and ecological implications of these transformations and argues for an autonomous, alter-ontological posthumanism: composting everyday lives and ecologies to nurture liveable and just worlds.

KEYWORDS

Ecology, hackers, justice, maker movement, technoscience.

RESUMEN

El lenguaje, la información y el espacio virtual fueron las características distintivas de la generación anterior. La creación, la materia y la fusión de lo digital y lo material son los elementos que definen a la generación M, la primera generación del siglo XXI. Este ensayo explora las implicaciones materiales, sociales y ecológicas de estas transformaciones, y argumentan por un posthumanismo autónomo y alter-ontológico: compostar las vidas y ecologías de lo cotidiano para nutrir mundos justos en los que se pueda vivir.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Ecología, hackers, justicia, movimiento de creadores, tecnociencia.

1. Language, information and the virtual space were distinctive features of the previous generation. Craft, matter and the fusion of the digital and the material are defining generation M, the first generation of the 21st century.
2. Generation M makes stuff. Not through mass production but by tweaking and expanding the capabilities of existing things and processes. The maker's craft: hacking, tinkering, stretching, knitting, inventing, weaving, forking, recombining.
3. Making starts from what is there. Intensive recycling. Immediate caring. Generation M lives in a terraformed earth: climate change, toxic environments, the 6th extinction, soil degradation, energy crises, increasing enclosures of the naturecultural commons. It encounters these harmful life thresholds with response-ability for the limits of productionism. Production does not characterise generation M's mode of life—co-existence does. Responsible terraformation. We make as we co-exist in ecological spaces.
4. Generation M is all about collaborations that create the very material conditions we live in. But these are neither collaborations between individuals or minds, nor social cooperation. These are collaborations between diverse material and symbolic forces of living matter and abiotic matter. Beyond the masculine and able-bodied logic of expansive productionism making is, literally, about creating and maintaining relations and exchanges in proximity (not necessarily spatial or temporal proximity).
5. It is about making life with other beings and material formations. The organisational principle of this mode of existence is neither the singular subject nor the network nor the pack but the communities of species and things. The microbiome is a manifestation of this principle: to be invaded and to let oneself be invaded by bacterial communities, to be a host and to be under attack simultaneously—co-exist, exchange, change—in order to form a sustainable life. From the sterile environments of network society, cognitive capitalism and

the knowledge economy that characterised the previous generation to the wet, contagious involutions of interspecies and multi-material communities.

6. Making is uncomfortable with both the mass production of the Fordist era and the lean production of the post-Fordist period. We move from industrialism through immaterial labour to embodied manufacturing; from the factory through the social factory to communal production.

7. Generation M's work is self-organised and community managed. Post-Fordism is characterised by the flexibilisation and precarisation of work. Precarity is institutionalized in the public and private sectors and presented as unavoidable for society and economy. Responses that oppose precarity (as trade unions occasionally do) or fantasize zero work (70s-80s social movements and their revivals) become irrelevant as work in the M age becomes inextricable from our very ontological make-up.

8. The digital and the material fuse. The digital alone is no longer the drive of social life and innovation. There is no opposition between matter and code. Everyday objects are digitalized and interlinked within the web of things.

9. Technoscience is more than knowledge and innovation. It is the immediate and vital environment which the first generation of the 21st century inhabits. The participation in and the appropriation of technoscience is essential for Generation M's self-organised and community managed work.

10. Financialisation, algorithmic valuation and the virtualisation of money served as the engines for strengthening the trembling economies of the Global North in the previous decades. But together with the creative, digital and service industries they now become conservative and conventional socio-economic sectors. Micro-manufacturing and hacking percolates into these sectors and transforms their social and material composition.

11. Various social movements prepared the ascendance of generation M by defending social rights, expanding the commons, creating open software/open science/open hardware, by fighting for a real democratic, equal and just access to material and symbolic resources against racist, sexual, gender and geo-political exclusions.

12. Social movements in the M age make a step further. They will not only act politically and institutionally to defend the commons but immerse in immediate, real, material practices for commoning life and the environment. A new cycle of social antagonism is emerging, one that unfolds through molecules, tissues, composite materials, energy flows, cross-species love, mundane caring for others we live with.

13. This is ecological transversality—the transfer of substances, processes and practices across disparate material registers and communities of life. Today, we are stuck in the process of translation. As much as translation is necessary it captures only a small part of the communication between disparate communities. Rather than through translation, communication happens through involuntary infections and contingent permutations between organisms or substances that attract each other.

14. Making is always located in mundane interactions and encounters across divergent ecologies. This is the unintentional gift economy of matter and cross-species action. The maker's worlds always contaminate each other laterally. Drifting matter. Stuck in translation, we believe in the one universal world of communication and value.

15. This is the underlying trope of the anthropocene narrative: We terraformed Earth™! We have created this mess! Against the anthropocene story as the ultimate popular and intellectual fantasy of ecological guilt and techno-redemption a new practical imaginary captures Generation M: Another world is possible! Another world is here! A world that challenges the oppressive universalism of the maker-of-one-world. Generation M inverts terraformation: neither the making of one single ontology nor the making of multiple ontologies, but grounded making: the non-anthropocentric making of alter-ontologies. From alter-globalisation to alter-ontologies.

16. Making::composting. Everyday life as something that can be composted, as something that has the capacity in the right conditions to change its ontological constitution in ways that avoid erosion, toxicity, and acidity. To compost is to sustain an environment that allows mixtures of organic residues to decompose and transform into new organic compounds for nurturing the soil and growing plants; to compost everyday life means to contribute to the emergence of new mixtures of social, biotic and inorganic materials that nurture liveable worlds.

17. Surveillance and control of the virtual space (think NSA) is destructive and oppressing, but a similar type of surveillance on the material level would be truly terrifying. The direct surveillance of bodies and ecologies on a chemical-molecular level will cause unbelievable pain and install totalitarian control. Generation M feels this danger. The hope is in acting autonomously to protect our own bodies and the eco-bodies from the malignant growth of material policing.

18. Some of the infrastructures of generation M's autonomy are already under construction. Justice engrained into the material constitution of our lives. Striving for institutional justice is not enough. Justice needs to be fought for on the level of matter and through close alliances between engaged groups of animals and plants, committed groups of humans and accessible material objects.

19. The hype of human-nonhuman mixtures cannot sustain the commitment to material justice. Posthumanism and actor networks are not good enough for this. An autonomous political posthumanism emerges in the infrastructures of the M era: political autonomy as material interconnectedness; being in the quantum vortex of constant interdependences; knowing and naming one's allies; building communities of justice, that is action groups of committed humans and engaged non-human others.

20. Generation M is not a 'post' generation. Generation M is in the making. Compost. Generation M does not announce something definite and new; it is the first generation that makes itself—literally. Many things are possible and many worlds can emerge within the situated constraints of our material interdependences.

21. M for matter, M for manufacture, M for material, M for making, M for makers, M for microbiomes.

22. M for Gaia.

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