



Ding Qiao 'Ling' Leader, iPhone production, China

Isak Wisloff—03 www.Fieldnotes

The phenomena that now should hold our attention are the avalanche-like processes of bifurcation—characterised by the amplification of fluctuation—in the downstream markets of *terrestrial* scale enterprises, whether corporate or governmental. The problem being that these appear to be out of control. An economic problem, upstream and downstream of our present condition, *now*:

We take responsibility for developments not only *beyond* our scope, but also *lacking* responsivity: 'responsibility' also writes 'the ability to respond'—which should be our focus, rather than the responsibility that weights on us. In other words: if we have a sense of responsibility, we should take stock of what we can *do* (moving within and beyond what each of us may feel). *How to re/act?*

The mix between *partaking* of governmental-corporate responsibility and our *limited* ability to respond. The *limited* responsibility of private corporations. The *deregulation* of trade enacted at a governmental level. Between us and the impact we may have is the realm of *statistics, surveys, polls and elections*. A buffer zone between democratic *debates* and taking corporate/state *action*.

Upstream: governmental *deregulation*. Downstream: accelerating *markets*. Midstream: computing statistics and trolling *meta-data*. But in all this activity it appears that the core of the issue has been systematically evacuated; which is the aspiration to *precision* on the matters that humans can and have done something about: that is *specifically* what, precisely how and to which extent.

Are the human populations of the earth defined upstream or downstream of productive economic activities? If defined downstream, they are *consumers*. If defined upstream, they are *citizens*. A number of attempts have been made at defining groups and interests in both terms conjointly, especially in Europe. What about the miners in Congo and Bolivia, assemblage workers in China?

The miners are not your typical consumer in the OECD-country sense. Nor are the assemblage-workers your typical western citizen. All the vast populations that are working in the *mean time*, hoping that their conditions will change: be it as consumers, citizens or both. The states of *exception* are proliferating with crisis-conditions: a no-man's land populated by the *precariat*.

After the onslaught of a *sequence* of crises—the pandemic, war and climate damage—the *consequence* is the proliferation of the precariat. The populations of the comfortable economic regions of the world appear currently to be joining ranks with the *precariat*. So, it would appear that there are some issues that will be brought out of the shadows, at this point of human history.

The democratic idea is revolutionary in one fundamental sense: its basic claim is that citizens come *before* governing bodies (the State and its derivatives). It contrasts with the non-democratic idea that governing bodies come *before* citizens: if there are citizens it is because there is first a State. So, in the democratic idea the citizens are *upstream* of the State; or, *precondition* it.

In liberal economies, the consumer is the horizon of production: with *retail* as its penultimate point. The consumer is *downstream* of production and corporate action. The human life-form is caught within a contradiction—of being a citizen *and* a consumer—which has been somehow workable provided the framework of elections and affluence. But what about if either of them fails?

Isak Wisløff's artistic research project in design—called Dopaminizing—raises this question. How can we presently lift the haze of digital dependencies, to articulate the human life-form *midstream* of politics and business and develop our *cultural* awareness of a human life form promised to its present, past and future? Will we here find a break *between* our life-projects *and* deep ecology?