

**Construction of One
A First Scenario**
Liam Gillick

March 2004

This text is the first outline of a potential new book with the provisional title "Construcción de Uno". The book will reveal the activities of a group of people who worked in a relatively experimental factory in Northern Europe in the early 1970s and will follow their development following the recent closure of the plant. While the primary activity of the factory was to produce objects, the methods of production were intended to alleviate what had been identified as the most destructive aspects of life on the traditional production line. The subsequent take-over of the company and closure of the factory leaves nearly all of the former employees without work, especially the older ones. Because it was a relatively progressive company they have generous severance payments and some time to consider what to do next. As the money runs out they get increasingly anxious about what to do and increasingly alienated from the dynamic of the society that surrounds them. We rejoin the group some time later. Could be now, but probably better if it is understood to be part of a near future. While many have moved on or found different activities to get involved in, there are still a large number of idle people scattered throughout the city who all remember their days at the factory developing new ways to work together. After some time they start to gather each day at the now abandoned production plant, drawn there by some sense of purpose and collectivism. They notice that the doors to the administration block have been left open. No one has secured the building and no-one has wrecked it either. They start to spend their time in their old workplace, looking out at the countryside through the large windows that were installed in order to give them a more beautiful working environment when the factory was built. In the past they had to work with their backs to the windows, they now have time to sit and stare at the countryside surrounding the factory while discussing what to do next. Their feelings about the place are ambiguous. They would never damage the buildings, but they like to reorganise the signage, spending part of each day reconfiguring the former signs and information boards in the building so that they now provide a complex reflection of their schizophrenic relationship to the place. The nuanced working practices that they grew up with de-emphasised the idea of absolute equality of working speed and technique and promoted the idea of flexibility and interactive teamwork, the idea was to create a complex sequence of relationships that were dependent upon ability, focus, the alleviation of boredom and control by the workers over the amount of hours worked in any given shift. For a while they discuss the idea that this suppression of equality lead to the ultimate failure of their working environment. But there is no way that they can readjust or discover new models of community without acknowledging difference and desire. So they decide that instead of making people equal or treating them as if they can all work and think at the same speed that there should be an attempt at developing a situation where there is an equality of production instead. Their working environment will remain nuanced and complex while what goes in will come out with no addition, deletion, waste or surplus. One element of energy, stuff, thinking or desire will produce one element of energy, stuff, thinking or desire.

So we have a group of people working in the north of Europe. In this case they all happen to produce cars, but they could be producing any industrial product. It is better if it is a consumer product. Object based rather than service orientated. It is also better if the product is not exclusively part of high technology production. It involves creating something big, where there are pressures to achieve a certain build quality that are not predetermined by the nature of the components themselves but all to do with how those elements are checked and how they are combined. While the old idea might be that they are really producing relationships rather than objects it is better if we understand that they are just producing cars or trucks most of the time. They are well paid and they attend work most days. The relationship between the managers and owners and workers is reasonable. There have been strikes in the past, but normally it is possible to talk things through before it gets to that. Somehow it has evolved that most of the people working in the factory feel that they have an investment in the place. Many of the managers come from the local area and the same schools as the workers on the production line. However, there is little sense of overwhelming hierarchy at work here, just the feeling that some people are better at organising and some would rather work with their hands. There are an equal number of men and women and the few recent immigrants in the community were also welcomed and well represented at the factory. Some people are in wheelchairs and some cannot see and some cannot hear. The company always encouraged everyone who wanted to work there to come and do so. Some like to work in a way that means they have to worry and think outside the workplace, others like to arrive, work and then go home without reflecting a great deal about what happened and what will come next. Many of the managers and organisers were originally working on the production line, but decided to get new training and move into a supervisory position. The company produces quite good but quite expensive cars or car-sized products. Many of them are exported as people appreciate the precise way they are built and their good safety record. They don't rust or decay too quickly and the company makes an effort to recycle parts whenever possible. The cars signify something precise, stable, responsible and individualistic in the society. The factory produces symbols of pragmatic concern. The existence of the products is based on an acceptance that people rather like moving around in cars, but if they have to do so, then at least the cars ought to be reasonably ecologically sound, last quite a long time and not signify excess or poverty. A levelling up of social values is suggested by ownership of the cars that are made in this factory. They are cars that might be chosen by a well qualified professional person for their enduring values but could also be the choice of someone on a low budget who wants to spend some money once or twice in their working life on a car that will last for an extremely long time.

We have to think hard about this group of people who were working in a place of production that employed new models of behaviour just before it imploded and was absorbed within a much more apparently predatory structure, who come back to meet each other and play out the ongoing sway between working in isolation and working in groups. It turns out that they were actually producing something that provides a base level productivity model for the parasitical group who has

finally removed all production from them. In other words, their pioneering practices were adopted and adjusted primarily for their propaganda value, but the actual changes that were produced have been abandoned in favour of an increasing sense of destabilisation and corruption of the social structure. Their earlier attempts at flexibility have been applied to them as individuals too. They have become a mutable element; part of the production line, element that are forced to adapt, quit or evolve whether they like it or not. They are no longer producing objects or things but they are playing out models of activity that function as a reminder to the people involved in more exploitative models of behaviour of how things could be. Therefore they realise that they are being manipulated but for a while they had been permitted to survive within a relatively progressive working environment much longer than their brothers and sisters elsewhere as there was cultural capital in their lingering existence as symbols of what could have been and what will soon be gone.

We have to consider the idea of a place of production quite carefully. This place may well be a new model, or could be a combination of old models. It probably involves some sequence of activities that has been reworked so that it now projects contradictory messages. It may well appear to belong to a culture or a situation that does not in fact own the base capital that appears to fund it. The symbolism of this place is local yet it does not draw on local resources nor provide much in return to those who service and consume it, most things are imported and exported without making much other impact on the area. Elaborate devices are employed by those who are involved in the mediation and continuation of this place of production in order to ensure that there is a constant grouping and splitting of those involved in the apparent localised productivity of the place. The bringing together of groups and shattering of them followed by a repetition of the same ad infinitum, or so it seems to be. The necessity for moments alone is crucial to this ongoing recombination of people, ideas and systems. Pressures are applied to all the people who work in this place of production to ensure that they require moments of isolation from the group, not in order to become involved in meaningful moments of self-reflection, but just to recover from the weight of contradictory circumstances. This appears to provoke a sense of negative potential, but in fact this is just the way this specific place is ordered. It is not necessary to extrapolate outwards from this place under consideration and apply the circumstances as a model to all situations. New forms of non-localism have evolved.

As the factory is squeezed and eroded by the encroaching crisis that turns the workers into flexible units there is a day when the place is forced to shift to a classical production line again, with the cars moving at a fixed speed and an obligation to work as hard as possible to keep up. Shortly after this point it is announced that the factory will close for good. What we are dealing with here is a sequence of questions that develop once the former workers decide to become productive again in real terms with specific regard to altering the relations of production that caused them to be part of a collapse of potential. They try to develop a concept of production with a one to one exchange value in terms of input and output. They want to create an economy of "equality". They are trying to find a sense of balance that has nothing to do with classical ideas of harmony or efficiency. Production becomes a game to them where they replace the value of one thing with its equivalent in terms of energy, time, ideology and potential. Their idea is to create a revolution that is continual as it keeps overturning and replacing structures with their mirror or equivalent while people and concepts are kept a continual state of flux in order to maintain such a situation. In time they become incapable of seeing the collapses that surround them as they have found a way to alleviate the contradictions of their condition through a mass of paradoxes and mental games loaded on top of each other.

Over time they completely reconfigure the working space of their new work. They write on the walls and create diagrams on the floor that reveals the passage of their thoughts, false starts and developments. More windows are opened up in the space to create new vistas and bring them closer to the exterior spaces that now make them anxious and should be kept as a view not an experience. Some people work all night and if you are driving past the factory you might see them through the windows, involved in long discussions and lengthy expositions of their ideas. They attempt to find a way to create a total transfer of all objects and ideas in such a way as to ensure that nothing is depleted or diminished but everything is different. They are exhausted but happy. Their work is personally destructive but provides a new matrix of exchange. The focus upon one to one exchange ensures that they are the primary element of depletion. Through their desire to create an "economy of equality" they ensure their own rapid demise. They have created numerous models, equations and diagrams that will ensure that everything can be exchanged and remain the same simultaneously.