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## *I don't know what freedom is, not at all...<sup>1</sup>*

Growing up is politics, conditioned ideologically and affectively by the social communities that surround us. Dejan Kaluđerović's long-term art project: *Conversations: Hula Hoops, Elastics, Marbles and Sand* (2013–present) is a reminder of the fact that childhood is not spared from political reality and political thought, however much this period of life, often referred to as the age of innocence, may be devoid of social responsibility for the things that happen and will continue to happen in the future. The basic setting for each art piece within this project is the playground as the place where different voices of children are gathered, coming from various – and at the same time paradigmatic – social, economic, cultural, technological and political backgrounds. The playground thus grows into the children's forum that, through a set of posed questions and their answers, reveals the thoughts, emotions, doubts, misunderstandings, limitations and interpretations of the world in which we live. Discussing some important topics and commonplaces, children are able to articulate the political reality and imagine their own country and society, while at the same time they testify to social antagonisms and permanent war. The past, the present and the future disappear in the all-encompassing time in which life evolves behind the real geopolitical spaces and their dominant narratives. In other words, the playground is presented as the place where innocence, ingenuity and imagination blur those safe zones within which the banality of evil vis-à-vis society, that is, vis-à-vis the other, is for the first time manifested in each individual childhood.

Children's typical black-and-white representations of the world, events and people paradoxically indicate the complex politics of everyday life, whose value systems are today built by (post-)ideological and (post-)social identities. The hybridity and/or intersectionality of all existing identities are set against the so-called essentialist categories of class, race, gender, religion, nationality and many others, through the perspectives of postcolonial and other deconstructionist approaches that still strive towards some imaginary – as well as usurped – democracies. These are in fact global democratic values that determine social life in terms of economics, situate political power and reproduce the contemporary everydayness of patriarchy, colonialism and neoliberalism, appealing to the heritage of civilization, which belongs to the hegemonic mechanisms of power. While we may be speaking about different geopolitical zones, whose differences have been pacified and culturalized by various new politics of identity, the global structures within which these diverse identities are politically distributed, classified and evaluated/subjugated are in fact the same.

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<sup>1</sup> The answer given by Mina, a seven-year-old girl of Arab descent, to the question of what freedom is, taken from the Israeli version of the *Conversations: Hula Hoops, Elastics, Marbles and Sand* (2013–present) project.

WELL, I DON'T REALLY KNOW WHAT IT MEANS. BEING A GIRL IS... HM... I DON'T KNOW. I DON'T HAVE ANY OPINIONS REGARDING GIRLS. BEING A GIRL MEANS THAT YOU HAVE A DIFFERENT CHARACTER FROM BEING A BOY. I DON'T KNOW WHAT BEING A GIRL MEANS. IN MY OPINION, BEING A GIRL IS LIKE BEING A BOY. I REALLY DON'T KNOW. LIKE OUR BEHAVIOURS, OUR HAIR... UMM... OUR LOOKS... OUR CLOTHES... FOR EXAMPLE HE HAS HIS BOYISH BEHAVIOURS, LIKE MY COUSIN HE GETS ANGRY ALL THE TIME, HE BEHAVES LIKE OTHER BOYS BUT WE ARE VERY DIFFERENT. LIKE WE TALK IN A SOFT VOICE... UMM... WE SPEAK CLEARLY... WE SPEAK VERY WELL... EVEN IF WE SHOUT WE SOUND DIFFERENT. TO BE A GIRL... AH... IT MEANS THAT WE CAN... MOTHERS CAN DELIVER EITHER A BOY OR A GIRL, IT DOESN'T MATTER IF THEY HAD A GIRL ALTHOUGH THEY WANTED A BOY. IT DOESN'T MATTER IF IT IS A GIRL THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS THAT THEY KNOW WHATEVER GOD... WHATEVER GOD HAS GIVEN THEM THEY NEED TO LOVE IT. HM... MM... FOR ME THIS MEANS NOTHING. A GIRL IS A GIRL. BEING A GIRL MEANS... A GIRL IS JUST A GIRL, A HUMAN BEING, NOT A BOY. A GIRL HAS LONG HAIR. A GIRL HAS HER OWN TASTE. ESPECIALLY LITTLE GIRLS, THEIR FAVORITE COLOR IS ALWAYS PINK. AND THEN, WHEN YOU GET OLDER YOU CAN CHOOSE ANY COLOR YOU WANT. I DON'T HAVE ANY SPECIAL IDEA. WELL, MAYBE SOME BOYS LIKE PINK. BECAUSE ONE BOY IN MY CLASS, HIS NAME IS OGNJEN, HE LIKES PINK BUT HIS MUM NEVER BUYS HIM PINK, BECAUSE HIS MUM THINKS IT IS MORE FOR GIRLS. BEING A GIRL MEANS LOVING... DIFFERENT FLOWERS... I DON'T KNOW... LOVING PINK... UGH, DISGUSTING. A GIRL IS WHEN, I THINK IT IS WHEN YOU ARE SOMEHOW GIRLY, YOU LIKE MAKE UP AND ALL THAT. A GIRL SHOULD TAKE CARE OF HOW SHE LOOKS, SHOULD HELP HER MOTHER. BUT A BOY IS DOING HIS OWN BUSINESS. MM... GIRLS... MM ARE HM USUALLY NOT AS SPO... SPORTIVE WELL BOYS ARE SPO... MORE SPORTIVE AND GIRLS DO OTHERS THINGS FOR EXAMPLE BALLET AND... AND GIRLS USUALLY COOK AND... DO SUCH THINGS. WELL, IN GENERAL, ALMOST NO [DIFFERENCE], SOME GIRLS WANT TO BECOME A DOCTOR, SOME - A HAIRDRESSER... SOME WANT TO BECOME MILITARY SOLDIERS, FOR EXAMPLE, MY LITTLE SISTER, SHE DREAMS OF BECOMING MILITARY MAN... AND SHE DOES BOXING ALL THE TIME, AND DOES EXERCISES. SHE GOES IN FOR [HOW IS IT CALLED?]... OSETIAN DANCING, BALLET, BREAK DANCE... SHE GOES. I ALSO GO IN FOR BREAK DANCE WITH HER. WELL, GIRLS, ONE OF MY FRIENDS IS ALWAYS SHOWING OFF AND HER NAME IS ANASTASIA, SHE JUST SHOWS OFF, LIKE, SHE WANTS TO BEAT ME IN BEING CLEVERER SO SHE ALWAYS GETS ME INTO TROUBLE SO THAT I HAVE TO GO TO THE SCHOOL COUNSELLOR. GIRLS ARE... ARE TALL SOMETIMES, SOMETIMES LITTLE, ALMOST LIKE BOYS, ONLY THEY HAVE LONGER HAIR... AND... THEIR DIFFERENCE IS THEIR HAIR, AND ALSO WOMEN WEAR MANTO AND SCARF... AND... I THINK GIRLS ARE QUITE OKAY, BECAUSE... GIRLS DO OTHER THINGS DIFFERENT THAN BOYS, THEY DANCE FOR EXAMPLE... OR RATHER PLAY... WITH EACH OTHER... OR BOYS RATHER PLAY SOCCER OR SO, I WOULD NEVER DO THAT... YES. AND WHAT DO YOU THINK? WELL THERE ARE MANY KINDS OF GIRLS, THERE ARE HYSTERICAL, WHO GET ANNOYED FOR THE SMALLEST THING STRAIGHT AWAY, THERE ARE GOOD GIRLS, THERE ARE BAD ONES; THERE ARE MANY KINDS OF GIRLS. WELL BOYS BEHAVE A BIT... A BIT AHM... A BIT... NASTIER... AND GIRLS ARE A BIT... WELL, NOT, NOT AS AGGRESSIVE. BOYS ARE NAUGHTY... WHEN YOU TELL THEM SOMETHING BAD THEY GET VERY UPSET. I DON'T THINK THAT THERE'S A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BEING A BOY AND BEING A GIRL, I DON'T KNOW WHY, BUT SINCE KINDERGARTEN THAT'S WHAT I THINK. THEY HAVE SHORT HAIR. BUT SOME PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD, SOME OF THEM HAVE LONG HAIR. LITTLE BOYS ALWAYS LIKE BLUE. THEIR FAVORITE TOYS ARE MOSTLY CARS AND GIRLS HAVE DOLLS. BOYS LOVE BLUE, BUT WHEN THEY GET OLDER THEY CAN CHOOSE THE COLOR THEY LIKE. TO BE A BOY MEANS TO BE STRONG, THAT EVERYONE NOTICES YOU AND STUFF. I THINK BOYS FIGHT MORE OFTEN THAN GIRLS. THERE ARE BOYS WHO LIKE TO FIGHT, TO KICK, TO HIT OTHERS WITH THEIR FISTS, AND THERE ARE SOME GOOD BOYS WHO LIKE TO PLAY WITH OTHERS, EVERYTHING OPPOSITE. THERE ARE SOME BOYS WHO, HOW SHOULD I SAY IT, ARE GIRLY BOYS WHO DO EVERYTHING LIKE GIRLS: WALK LIKE GIRLS, PUT MAKE-UP ON, PUT NAIL VARNISH ON, THERE. I... CAN'T QUITE EXPLAIN THAT. BECAUSE BOYS ARE STRONG, THEY CAN DO ANYTHING. BUT GIRLS ARE WEAK, THEY CAN DO NOTHING. BUT BOYS CAN DO EVERYTHING. MM BOYS ARE DOING MORE RUNNING THAN GIRLS... AND... DO USUALLY... DRINK ALCOHOL... AND... BEING A BOY MEANS BEING A MAN. IT MEANS BEING STRONG, COURAGEOUS, BRAVE. A BOY IS SOMEONE WHO CAN ALWAYS PROTECT HIMSELF. A BOY MEANS A GROWNUP AND WISE PERSON. BEING A BOY IS THE SAME THING AS A GIRL. I THINK IT IS JUST SIMILAR, YET I THINK GIRLS FIGHT MORE OFTEN THAN BOYS DO. THERE ARE SOME BOYS WHO ARE GOOD AND LIKE TO PLAY NICELY, AND THERE ARE THOSE BAD ONES WHO LIKE TO HURT OTHER PEOPLE. A BOY NEVER HELPS ANYONE. HALF OF THE BOYS ARE GOOD, HALF OF THE BOYS ARE BAD. BECAUSE, BAD ONES HIT THEIR PARENTS, THEY DON'T HELP OLD PEOPLE, ANYONE. THEY BEHAVE BADLY IN FRONT OF SOME PEOPLE, THEY CAN HIT THEIR MOTHER IN FRONT OF SOME PEOPLE, THEY CAN SAY ANYTHING, THEY CAN OFFEND... THIS MEANS A BOY.

*What does it mean to be a girl?*

The *Conversations: Hula Hoops, Elastics, Marbles and Sand* project (2013–present) brings before us the fact that the knowledge of the power mechanisms that regulate social relations is deeply rooted in childhood. The project faces us with the realization that these mechanisms originate in the family as the nuclear unit of civil society, the foundations for and basic functioning principles of which were set by the union between patriarchy and capitalism a long time ago (the so-called bourgeois family). Built as an ethically untouchable biopolitical construct, the family has to this day preserved its status of an apolitical and private socio-economic organization, notwithstanding some minor disturbances caused by the ideology of the October Revolution in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Following the ideas of communism and socialism, this radical social change was an attempt at solving numerous issues of the class system, as well as the woman questions of unpaid and invisible work, oppression and structural violence of patriarchy. We might here refer to Alexandra Kollontai, who substitutes the view of the family as the foundation of capitalist patriarchy for a vision of new collectives and communities, which today sounds like an impossible political, economic and cultural social utopia:

*Communist society considers the social education of the rising generation to be one of the fundamental aspects of the new life. The old family, narrow and petty, where the parents quarrel and are only interested in their own offspring, is not capable of educating the “new person”. The playgrounds, gardens, homes and other amenities where the child will spend the greater part of the day under the supervision of qualified educators will, on the other hand, offer an environment in which the child can grow up a conscious communist who recognises the need for solidarity, comradeship, mutual help and loyalty to the collective.*<sup>1</sup>

The new society, which had in the meantime been adapted by patriarchy to the new social ideology of communism, did make some progress though, at least in the attempts to build a welfare state in which the social infrastructure provided a woman with certain benefits for some time regarding the so-called reproductive work. In this way, the division of family labour and social reproduction became in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century inscribed in the process of labelling the working class by means of naturalisation of traditional gender roles. Woman's well-being remained but a footnote to the prosperity of the man, so childbearing and rearing, domestic chores and consumer activities stayed the primary tasks of the woman, while, consequently, the man's paid work retained its status of privilege.<sup>2</sup> Built on the supposedly “natural” male v. female values and the constructed moral categories of the working woman with a family, political economy created the conditions that allowed for the relationship between production and the gender division of labour to become more and more re-traditionalised over the course of time. The failure of socialism's clash with patriarchy at the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well the failure of socialism by itself, led to the appearance of structural nostalgia for the non-existent ideal family from the equally non-existent halcyon pre-socialist days, or, put differently, brought about the yearning for the “true family values” of neoliberal democracy. The paid work of men retained its privileged status legitimised during the political-economic transition within the post-socialist framework of contemporary capitalism, which is evidenced by, among other things, the increasing feminisation of

<sup>1</sup> Alexandra Kollontai, *Communism and the Family*, 1920, [www.marxists.org/archive/kollonta/1920/communism-family.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/kollonta/1920/communism-family.htm) (accessed on 25 July 2017)

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1988, pp. 53–93.

unemployment and poverty, the feminisation of service activities and low-paid jobs, the flexibility and precariousness of women's work, the suspension of women's social rights and the related quantification of their domestic labour, reproductive work and other forms of unpaid work, as well as the various modes of violence that successfully generate and maintain such structures. Re-traditionalising gender roles in the process of the re/production of everyday life within the increasingly more pronounced class differences of neoliberal society has contributed to the related problems being nowadays more and more frequently solved in the realm of the private/domestic instead of in that of the public/social/political.<sup>3</sup> Referring to Kaludjerović's project, collective heritage and the acquired knowledge of the basic values of family life and the division of labour become evident in the conversations about gender roles in the different social environments – post-socialist/post-communist, and capitalist, peripheral and central, (post-)transitional, etc. What is common to all these systems today is a global, neoliberal and seemingly culturally diverse structure of patriarchy from which any social and political opinion on what normative values of civilisation are is generated.

The patriarchal, that is, domestic matrix of neoliberal democracy is today certainly substantiated and modernised by each individual civil/citizen-subject within any given fundamental unit of society.<sup>4</sup> The simplified analyses of the politics and economy around us, which this project generates through children's answers to money-, power- and society-related issues, speak in favour of the fact that class dynamics and diversification are politically subjectivised through economy and the so-called citizen values of society. If we define contemporary society through the fact that all dimensions of human life in it are reduced to market rationality and relations formed on the basis of profitability, normativity and competitiveness, it becomes obvious that such a social system turns the citizen – male or female – into human capital, whose knowledge, characteristics and abilities present initial investments.<sup>5</sup> These investments depend on certain preconditions such as gender, class, race, but also on characteristics such as talent, appearance, resourcefulness, creativity, etc., which can be improved only if one possesses entrepreneurial abilities, which acquire the primary position in every realm of everyday life. To these, we might add strategic planning, organisation and administration of individual lives; individual choices, which refer to calculations according to the indicators of what is profitable, useful and successful; and, finally, individual responsibility and self-care, which are closely related to moral autonomy, on the one hand, and the arbitrary politics of human rights on the other. A place of prominence within civil/citizen-

<sup>3</sup> The division into the private and public realms has a long history, throughout which its basic meanings have remained largely unchanged, despite all historical changes and particularly as pertains to the position of women. The mutual relationship between the private and public realms was discussed by Hannah Arendt, who used as the starting point the difference between public spaces, which are political (Greek: *agora*), and private spaces, which are domestic, proprietary, and, in Ancient Greece, spaces of inequality. Arendt goes on to claim that social spaces are generated at the intersection of these two, at a much later period, when modern nation-states appeared alongside 'the social man', and when family became the basic unit of social, i.e. national economy (German: *Volkswirtschaft*). The research of these realms, therefore, as well as their representation in the social imagery, is the crucial demand posed today before any post-capitalist society and its political economy. Hannah Arendt, "The Public and the Private Realm", *The Human Condition*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1958, pp. 22–78.

<sup>4</sup> According to Wendy Brown, citizen-subjects act as neoliberal entrepreneurs in all aspects of their lives in neoliberal society. Wendy Brown, "Neoliberalism and End of Liberal Democracy", in *Edgework: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics*, Princeton University Press, 2005, pp. 42–44.

<sup>5</sup> According to Jason Read, who examines neoliberalism through the lens of particular production of subjectivity and the ways in which individuals are constituted as subjects of human capital. Jason Read, "A Genealogy of Homo Economicus: Neoliberalism and the Production of Subjectivity", *Foucault Studies*, no. 6, February 2009: Special Issue on *The Birth of Biopolitics*, pp. 25–36.



MMM I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT MEANS BEING POOR. I'VE HEARD BUT I DON'T KNOW. WHAT ABOUT YOU? YES. POOR PEOPLE FOR EXAMPLE... ER... FOR EXAMPLE HAVE VERY LITTLE MONEY, FOR EXAMPLE RICH PEOPLE FOR EXAMPLE HAVE A LOT OF MONEY, FOR EXAMPLE THEY CAN BUY ANYTHING THEY LIKE. TO BE RICH MEANS NOT TO CARE ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS TO OTHER PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT LIKE YOU. AND TO BE POOR IS LIKE YOU ARE MODEST. YOU DO NOT HAVE A LOT OF THINGS, BUT YOU DON'T REALLY NEED THEM... THAT'S HOW I WOULD SAY IT. I DON'T KNOW. MM BEING RICH MEANS THAT FOR EXAMPLE ONE HAS LOTS OF MONEY, AND POOR MEANS WHEN ONE, WELL WHEN ONE IS BEGGING AND HAS NO MONEY. SOME RICH ARE NOT GOOD, AND SOME ARE. THE POOR ARE GOOD, AND SOME ARE A BIT NAUGHTY BECAUSE THEY WANT TO STEAL MONEY. WHAT DO YOU THINK? IN MY OPINION, TO BE POOR, IS TO BE SOMEONE WITHOUT A LOT OF MONEY, BUT HE CAN BE HAPPY. BEING RICH IS SOMEONE WHO HAS A LOT OF MONEY, BUT HE IS NOT NECESSARILY HAPPY. WELL, FOR ME BEING RICH MEANS, THAT YOU HAVE A LOT OF MONEY AND YOU CAN BUY YOURSELF ANYTHING, AND BEING POOR FOR ME MEANS THAT YOU CANNOT JUST BUY EVERYTHING AND THAT YOU JUST... THAT YOU CAN JUST... AHM... ONLY BUY VERY CHEAP THINGS. WELL, THAT THE POOR ARE MORE RICH IN THEIR SOUL THAN IN MONEY, AND THE RICH ARE A BIT MORE POOR IN THEIR SOUL THAN IN MONEY. BEING RICH MEANS WHEN YOU HAVE A LOT OF MONEY. IT'S WHEN... YOU... MAYBE... YOU CAN BE... UMM... A MILLIONAIRE, A THOUSAND MILLIONAIRE... YOU CAN BUY... YOU CAN BE A TRILLIONAIRE. BEING POOR MEANS WHEN YOU HAVEN'T GOT A GRAM OF MONEY. WHEN YOU CAN'T BUY ANYTHING AND... YOU CAN'T EVEN BUY NORMAL JUICE. YOU CAN'T BUY ANYTHING WHEN YOU ARE POOR. WELL, IT IS CALLED RICH WHEN YOU HAVE A LOT OF MONEY, FOR EXAMPLE MILLIONS OR... OR EVEN MUCH MORE, AND IT IS CALLED POOR WHEN YOU, WHEN YOU ONLY HAVE VERY LITTLE MONEY AND YOU, AND YOU HAVE ALMOST NO MONEY AND YOU CAN HARDLY BUY ANYTHING. POOR MEANS, UMM... I MEAN SOMEONE WHO HAS A SMALL HOUSE, HE DOESN'T HAVE ANY CLOTHES, OR HE HAS A FEW CLOTHES. BEING RICH MEANS SOMEONE WHO HAS A VERY BEAUTIFUL HOUSE, BUYS ANY MEAL AND CLOTHES THAT HE WANTS AND THUS, HE IS RICH. A LOT OF RICH... PROBABLY, HE DOES SOME WORK AND EARNS MONEY, SO THAT HE BECOMES RICH. IF A HUMAN HAS GOOD KNOWLEDGE AND CAN BUY ANYTHING HE WANTS, IT MEANS BEING RICH. WHAT ABOUT YOU? POOR MEANS... THAT... YOU HAVE NO HOME AND NO MONEY. FROM THE ASPECT... THE IDEAL ASPECT. AND... BEING RICH MEANS THAT YOU HAVE A BIG HOUSE... AND YOU HAVE LOTS OF MONEY. A RICH PERSON IS SOMEONE WHO FOR EXAMPLE HAS A LOT OF MONEY AND THINGS BUT A POOR PERSON FOR EXAMPLE IS SOMEONE WHO HAS LITTLE MONEY AND HE CAN HARDLY GET THE THINGS HE WANTS. TO BE POOR MEANS TO LIVE IN THE STREET, NEVER... NEVER TO LIVE IN A FAMILY, TO BE A BEGGAR, TO FIGHT FOR A PIECE OF BREAD, ELSE... TO STARVE, TO BE THIRSTY, TO STEAL, AND TO LIVE IN A BOX, AT LAST, TO LIVE RICH... WELL, ONE CAN'T... WHEN YOU LIVE RICH, YOU CAN'T MAKE FUN OF THOSE WHO ARE POORER, YOU CAN'T CALL THEM, WELL, I DON'T EVEN KNOW HOW, BEGGARS, TO CUT A LONG STORY SHORT, RICHNESS IS GIVEN TO YOU IN ORDER NOT TO USE IT AGAINST SOMEBODY'S WILL, BUT TO USE IT WITH ONE'S MIND. POOR PEOPLE ARE THOSE WHO DON'T HAVE MONEY. THEY... THEY WALK ON THE STREETS, WITHOUT A HOUSE, AND ASK FOR MONEY. AND RICH, THAT IS PEOPLE WHO HAVE MONEY, A HOUSE, THEY ALREADY HAVE EVERYTHING, THEY HAVE A LOT OF MONEY, THEY ARE RICH. ONE... IN OUR BUILDING ON THE EIGHTH FLOOR ALREADY WITH A CARD, SO WE THINK THAT THEY ARE RICH, BECAUSE BEFORE THERE WAS JUST A BUTTON TO PUSH AND NOW WITH A CARD. I THINK... BECAUSE... FOR THE THIEVES NOT TO GO THERE. THE POOR LIVE HARD BECAUSE THEY DON'T HAVE NICE CLOTHES AND SO THEY HOLD SMALL POTS AND TELL US TO GIVE THEM SOME MONEY. TO BE RICH IS NOT SO GREAT. IT IS GREAT TO BE CLEVER.

*What does it mean to be poor or rich?*

subjectivisation is occupied by cultural differences<sup>6</sup> and social patterns that establish certain binary oppositions, such as majority/minority, centre/periphery, public/private, universal/particular, etc. In brief, when speaking about the civil/citizen-subject, we are actually speaking about homo economicus, or the man who produces himself<sup>7</sup> in the contemporary globalising circumstances of capitalism. At the same time, this human capital generates, through different identitary evaluations and power relations, the very notion of citizen society, i.e. human and democratic society, as the ultimatum of so-called civilisation.

<sup>6</sup> One of the products of culturalized systemic differences (based on the traditionally established categories of ethnic, gender and class affiliation) is a multicultural society that fragments and neutralises these systemic social differences (economic and political) by means of the politics of diversity and the ideology of tolerance. In this way, cultural (ethnic, gender, class) identity is implicit – and complicit – in the production of the neoliberal citizen-subject.

<sup>7</sup> This refers to the famous quote: “Homo Economicus is an entrepreneur, an entrepreneur of himself” Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, p. 226.

NO. I DON'T KNOW WHAT WAR IS. I'VE HEARD BUT I DON'T KNOW. WAR IS. WHEN... WHEN... WHEN TWO PEOPLE ARE NOT GETTING ALONG AND THEN THEN KEEP ON FIGHTING WITH EACH OTHER TILL DEATH. WAR IS... THEY FIGHT THERE... OVER THE FASCISTS. WAR MEANS. UMM... FIGHTING, SOME PEOPLE ARE FIGHTING. FOR EXAMPLE, AZERBAIJANIS FOUGHT WITH ARMENIANS AND RUSSIANS IN THE PAST. IT'S WAR. FIGHTING... WAR MEANS FIGHTING. AHM, YES I KNOW WHAT WAR IS. WELL, WAR MEANS THAT PEOPLE SHOOT EACH OTHER OR FIGHT. I DON'T REALLY, REALLY, REALLY, REALLY KNOW WHAT WAR IS. I JUST KNOW THAT IT'S A KIND OF... THERE ARE TWO GROUPS WITH... GUNS, PISTOLS, BOW AND ARROWS, ALL SORTS OF THINGS. AH... PEOPLE WHO KNOW HOW TO PUNCH, AND... THEY GO TO BATTLE AGAINST THE SECOND GROUP THAT HAS THE SAME THING. FOR EXAMPLE, THE USA AGAINST... EHH... JORDAN. I HEARD THAT SOME TURKS AND AS IF THEY WANTED TO CONQUER SERBIA. THE WAR IS WHEN ONE CITY FIGHTS WITH ANOTHER, LIKE ARMENIANS. THEY ARE ENEMIES OF OUR PEOPLE AND THEY OCCUPIED SOME... SOME REGIONS OF OURS. THEY SHOT MANY PEOPLE: SOME FATHERS, SOME CHILDREN, SOME MOTHERS. THEY... THEY SHOT EVERYONE, AND THE WAR LASTED FOR SEVERAL YEARS AND, FRANKLY SPEAKING, WE DON'T KNOW... WE DIDN'T READ THE PEOPLE... PEOPLE OF AZERBAIJAN BOOK, BUT I DISCOVERED ALL THOSE THINGS WHEN I READ THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE BOOK IN THE FIRST GRADE AT SCHOOL. WAR... WELL, IT IS WHEN SOME PERSON WANTS POWER: HE GATHERS AN ARMY AND ATTACKS SOME UNPROTECTED TOWN. AND OTHERS HAVE NOTHING LEFT BUT FIGHT. AND THIS STRIVING FOR POWER MAY SOON DESTROY THE WORLD AND TURN EVERYTHING INTO A WAR CAMP. WAR IS THE TIME WHEN ALL PEOPLE GO TO WAR, IT DOESN'T MATTER WHO THEY ARE. THEY JUST GO TO PROTECT THE MOTHERLAND. FIGHT, FIGHT, BUT SOON IT TURNS OUT THAT NOBODY WON. IT WAS JUST STUPID. SOMETIMES THESE ARE JUST CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS... SOMETIMES THEY SAY, DO YOU WANT WAR? YOU'LL GET IT... HE SAID THIS OUT OF STUPIDITY. SOMETIMES YOU SHOULD SAY: WHY DO YOU NEED THIS WAR? BUT WAR IS NOT SOMETHING THAT APPEARS, WAR IS SOMETHING THAT A MAN CREATES. IF A MAN DOESN'T WANT WAR, IT WON'T HAPPEN. WAR IS KILLING, RUNNING AWAY, BURNING, TO BE WITHOUT A HOME, THAT IS WAR. WAR IS WHEN SOMEBODY IS FIGHTING FOR THE TERRITORY WITH EACH OTHER. AND... AND SOME ARE SO AGGRESSIVE THAT THEY KILL EACH OTHER. THAT IS WHAT WAR IS CALLED... SOME ARE BURIED, SOME ARE LEFT ON THE BATTLEFIELD... THIS IS HOW IT HAPPENS. SOME GET INJURED AND THEY ARE TAKEN TO PHYSICIAN... A PHYSICIAN IS A MILITARY DOCTOR... BUT, IN GENERAL, I THINK THAT IT'S NO USE TO FIGHT... ONE CAN JUST PAY [BACK], THAT'S IT. AND YOU? I DON'T KNOW. WAR? YES I KNOW WHAT WAR MEANS. WAR IS WHEN TWO COUNTRIES, WELL WHEN, WHEN, FOR EXAMPLE SOME... WELL A SOLDIERS FROM THE OTHER COUNTRY KILLS ANOTHER AND THEN THERE IS WAR... AGAINST TWO COUNTRIES. THEY START TO HAVE A FIGHT WITH EACH OTHER BECAUSE OF SOME LITTLE AND MEANINGLESS PROBLEMS. NO, I DON'T EXACTLY UNDERSTAND WHAT WAR IS. IT SEEMS TO ME THAT I WON'T UNDERSTAND IT UNTIL ABOUT NINE YEARS FROM NOW, AND EVEN THEN I'M NOT SURE. BECAUSE IN ABOUT NINE MORE YEARS I'LL BE IN THE ARMY. UMM... YES. FOR EXAMPLE FROM DIFFERENT COUNTRIES... FOR EXAMPLE FROM DIFFERENT COUNTRIES... FOR EXAMPLE THEY COME AND HAVE WAR WITH ONE ANOTHER, FOR EXAMPLE THEY SHOOT EACH OTHER. THEY BRING TANKS... FOR EXAMPLE... THESE THINGS. WAR IS A DIFFERENCE OF OPINION WHICH LEADS TO SOMETHING EXTREME. IN MY OPINION. YES. LIKE FOR EXAMPLE TWO COUNTRIES ARE UNABLE TO AGREE WITH ONE ANOTHER, THEN THEY ATTACK EACH OTHER AND START A WAR. WAR? YES I KNOW. AS THEY OCCUPIED PALESTINE AND MADE IT ISRAEL. AT WAR THEY SHOOT AND KILL PEOPLE, WELL NOT PEOPLE BUT FASCISTS.

*Do you know what war is?*

The civilising process under the veil of global democracy (neo-colonialism) becomes more complex when war is involved as a self-justifying means of defence in a contemporary society of this kind. After patriarchy and neoliberal civil society, neo-colonialism is the third symptomatic layer of the project reading, at the same time, one of the questions that activate this artistic action. Children's perspectives on the global war and localised conflicts do not indicate that the condition of war is invisible in the world of adults, but rather that adults ignore it, being as individuals unable to change anything, since society is now excluded and alienated from the politics of everyday life, perhaps more than it has ever been. The politics of affect, manifested in different kinds of resistance, are soon absorbed in and revised according to the global reality that we only passively observe today in its transitions and systemic adaptations to the neoliberal civil society. Furthermore, the appropriation of the basic meanings of freedom and democracy

by such a society has made room for the main prerequisite for the perpetual war, which officially began with the Bush administration in 2001, as total war against terror(ism). Such war, initiated as a war without limits, is achieved by means of military interventions and the accompanying humanitarian action, arms trade treaties made in the name of global freedom, and the defence of democracy and human rights, whereby these possessed ideas become lucrative commodities to be exported and globally imposed as the foundations of contemporary civilisation.<sup>8</sup> Free market economy has, together with its neoliberal subjects and structures, produced a new type of state in which contemporary war – perpetual and global – is generated by administrative and governmental mechanisms. The nation-state of the past, now transformed into a neoliberal or war-state,<sup>9</sup> has brought about new modes of brutal exploitation and colonialism – symbolic, biopolitical and political-economic – which we live nowadays.

The fact that the war-state became a protective zone of the free market, finally, leads towards the conclusion that the neoliberal dimension of contemporary capitalism is actually the formative ideology behind total war. This ideology maintains the condition of permanent economic, political and social crisis, which is born under the imperative of democratic citizenship and self-righteous politics of the First World, and which serves to justify and direct the repressive measures of the new final solution. It is clear that the described world is the one we all live and participate in, caught in the network of complex social relations – not only those of power, but also of different identitary designations labelled onto human capital. What testifies to this is the primary knowledge that children acquire, consciously or not, but certainly with complete ingenuity, as they reproduce the existing global politics. The civil family, neoliberal society and perpetual war all appear as normative or generally accepted commonplaces of patriarchy, capitalism and colonialism, remaining ethically untouchable and socially unbreakable in the world of today, as well as in some imaginary future. What makes Dejan Kaluđerović's *Conversations: Hula Hoops, Elastics, Marbles and Sand* project (2013–present) horrifying in the context of the surrounding reality that we ourselves produce is not the series of children's answers, containing variations to the absorbed social narratives and the adopted behavioural models of dominant/oppressed worlds, but rather the absence of social imagination and the inability to foresee a possible world for all lying beyond these usual models of thinking, doing and living.

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<sup>8</sup> Angela Y. Davis, *The Meaning of Freedom: And Other Difficult Dialogues* (San Francisco: City Light Books, 2012), pp. 89–90.

<sup>9</sup> Marina Gržinić's definition of the war-state shaped by force, violence and fear is the precise definition of the neoliberal state, the definition that goes beyond the historical meaning of the fascist state in order to underline "what the major logic of dominance in the world today is, and this logic is the logic of war." Referring to Santiago López Petit, she explains the notion of postmodern fascism as a form of self-governmentality based on the self-management of a proper autonomy of differences for which the cohesive element is war. Such a war-state twists the meaning of the capitalist nation-state in order to "sterilize the Other, evacuate the conflict from public space and neutralize the political" constantly demanding: "a proliferation of unbelievable 'freedom' of particularities", of which the best example is the reconciling agenda of human rights, which keeps strong borders of power between central and peripheral identities. Cf. Marina Gržinić, "From Biopolitics to Necropolitics and the Institution of Contemporary Art", *Pavilion*, no. 14 (2010).