

A black cable with several green wires hanging from a thin wire against a light-colored, textured wall. The green wires are tangled and looped around the black cable.

# Things Do Making

Marius Land

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This digital version is meant to be shared freely, please do get in touch with questions or for further discussions:

Web [marius.land](http://marius.land)

Mail [hi@marius.land](mailto:hi@marius.land)

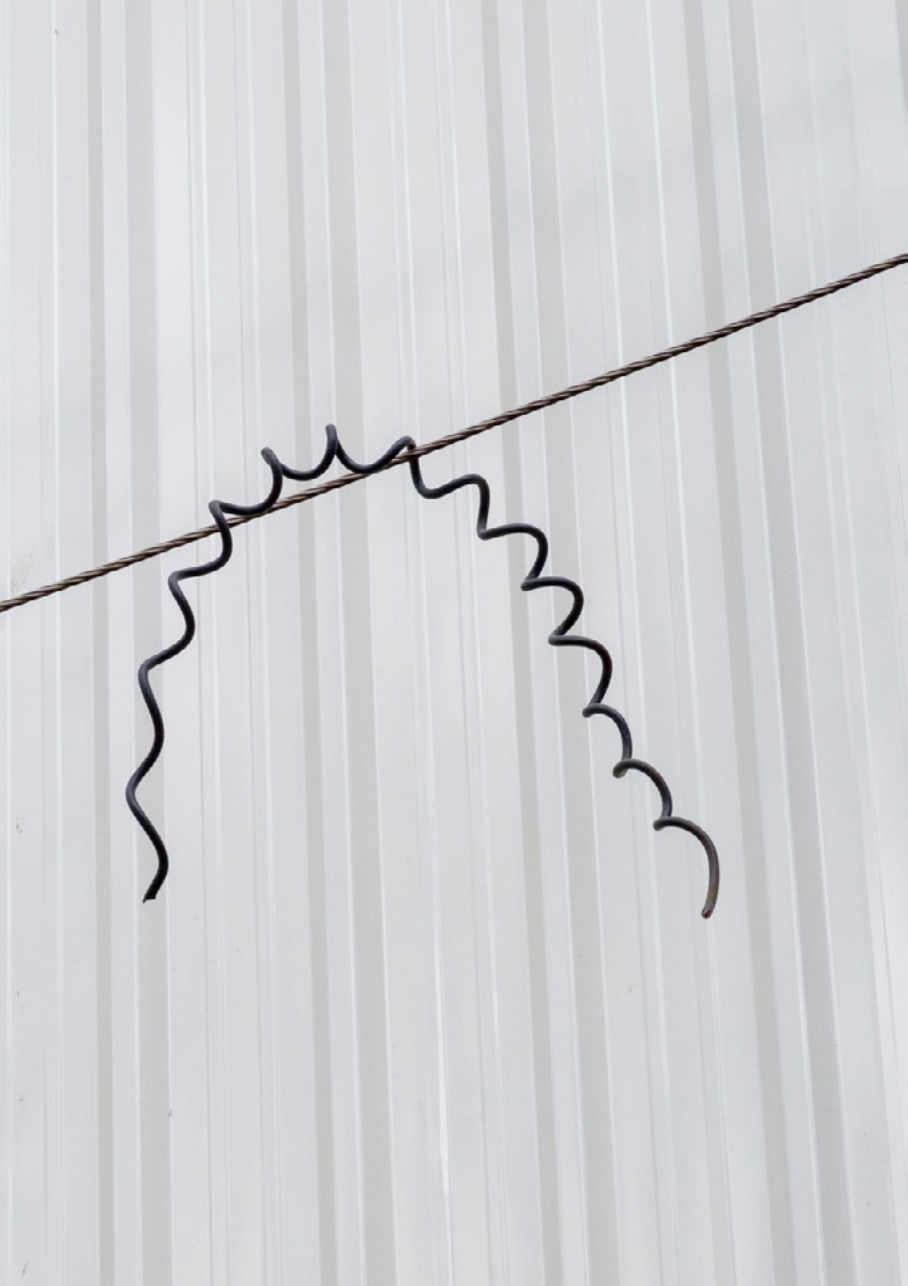
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## Doing more with less

A clock that is broken in half, is fixed by drawing its missing numbers on the wall. Flip-Flops made from coke bottles. Cable ties and Ducttape everywhere.

Surfing the internet, I encountered images of funny looking workarounds, made mostly from leftovers and scarce materials. Jugaad is the Hindi word that describes the pragmatic practice of finding alternative ways of making do, even if one lacks the proper materials and resources.

Colloquial meaning a quick fix, improvised or home-made solution, a frugal innovation, a temporary hack, botch job, bypass, by any means necessary, corruption, bribe. Everyday hacking, digital and mobile workarounds, information piracy, illegal copying and sharing. Provision, means of providing. Provisional Solution, providing for now. To gather together, to do something.

The Phenomena of Jugaad (India), Gambiarra



(Brasil), Jua kali (Kenya), Urawaza (Japan), Kludge (american), System D (France), Trick 17 (Germany), etc. form a decentralised worldwide network of loose local protocols and actions, executed to sustain oneself in scarcity.



[IMG 1](#)

Jugaad is everywhere in India. As a moment of national pride, when the president declared that a successful Mars mission, costing 10% of NASA's,<sup>1</sup> was made possible through jugaad thinking. As a moment of systematic incapability, when policies cannot be enforced due to

swelling corruption and individual benefit seeking. As an everyday practice of making do, forging a nationwide narrative of ingenuity pervading social class and status.

It has lately been picked up as the Indian way of frugal innovation for corporate R+D and marketing discourse, which uses out-of-the-box thinking

<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Amos, "[Why India's Mars Mission is so Cheap - and Thrilling](#)" BBC News, 2014.

to come up with simple but effective bottom-up solutions, the new cool, low cost frugal innovation strategy.<sup>2</sup>

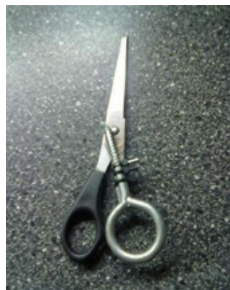
But jugaad originates in the everyday struggle of subaltern life in India. It is applied where resources, tools, and services are scarcely available, thus forcing people to find creative ways around material and legal restrictions.

To solve a problem, the question becomes *What do I have?* instead of *What do I want?* This question is fundamental, as it alters the basis on which one perceives their environment and what actions ensue, whether the problem is because of growth-driven consumerism and disposal or forced sustainability due to a lack of resources.

Initially, I was interested in the aesthetic quality of quick fixes, but the concept of jugaad quickly opened up for me as a social practice of perceiving materiality and one's everyday environment, a help network, a tool of navigation, a form of resis-

<sup>2</sup> Jaideep Prabhu, Navi Radjou, and Simone Ahuja, *Jugaad Innovation: Think Frugal, Be Flexible, Generate Breakthrough Growth* (Noida: Random House India, 2012).

tance and a way of coping with fate and desire. Since jugaad is a practice rather than a theory, this text recollects observations and thoughts on everyday practices from interviews with different people A<sup>3</sup> about their understanding of jugaad. Most conversations happened on long walks through Bangalore's neighbourhoods and with the incredible help and translation of Gayatri Ganju. Writing this text, I am still uncertain about my role in this, being an artist-in-residence, a privileged observer. So I hope to not end up just drawing a exotic figure of informality, but to learn from alternating protocols, that I consider helpful navigating in a reality that is becoming too functional, too complex, too much, too separated, too clean and too dirty at the same time.



[IMG 2](#)

<sup>3</sup> A is a conglomerate of different characters that I encountered and interviewed during the time of research. Since most of the people interviewed chose to stay anonymous, I created the collective identity A.



A

Let's take a look at A now.

A is the player, artist, receiver, consumer, composer, trickster and guard, taker, survivor, briber and actant, seller, deceiver and dweller.



[IMG 3](#)

A is a mason who lives with his family in a small village. A wants to enrol his two sons in school, so A came all the way to metropole B to work at a construction site. While working, A lives at the site, inhabiting a small, bare concrete room. In order to create a home away from home, A keeps his room tidy. Everything A owns has a dedicated place on the floor, except for a bag with ritual objects hung on the wall. Home is having routines and a social network. For A jugaad means organising himself in relation to his desires and fate. To raise money for his kids, A dives into the currents of time by giving up control over his space at home. This is his fate: operating in provided spaces and on the tasks of others, which are not his and not under his control.



[IMG 4](#)

A the electrician explains that jugaad is the management of scarcity and systematic half-life. No system is built to last; there will always be dirt wearing it out. Jugaad derives then from the bare necessity for finding solutions to cope with constant failure without having access to the needed resources to set it up properly.

Fixing something is investing yourself as a person into it, by becoming part of the thing – as an assemblage of humans and objects. Fixing something means becoming responsible for something, when there is no standard or norm to blame instead.

You use what you have and try to tinker the best out of it, aware that you will need to come back. You cannot use the given systematic properties, names and categories, since they don't make sense for your solution. So you bend and exceed those borders in order to deal with them. A becomes B, and a few B's bound together can lead to a C, which probably resembles a D or

even an F. Since Jugaad is used when you don't have your own terrain, it cannot rely on the same systematic checks and balances and therefore twists existing patterns and usage, in favor for a provisorium. Something that is (permanently) not meant to last.

Electricity itself knows no difference. It's the same everywhere. The obstacle is who has access to it.  $\Delta$  sees Jugaad as a practice of establishing informal access to formal networks, by working with given budgets and resources.  $\Delta$  becomes the gatekeeper, connecting formal and informal networks by tying themselves into the network.



[IMG 5](#)

A is in the scaffolding business and with every new job they acquire, there are new problems. In order to solve them, they need to wrap their head around these problems. Wrapping your head around something, means you become able to see the problem from more than one side, allowing you to see space and time simultaneously. Not only what things seem to be in the moment, but what else they could be.



[IMG 6](#)

A works in a small recycling company, but there is hardly enough work and thus many days without pay. In order not to lose this time, A seeks other opportunities by buying bulks of discarded cables in order to extract the copper braids. If there is no work in the recycling company, A calls their friends and family and use the company's facilities to do their own business. At the end of the day, the copper is sold and everybody gets a share of the profits. A lands a coup, a lucky punch, making them more resilient against the bottlenecks and shortcomings of their employment.



[IMG 7](#)

A is a group of road workers who have been given a plot of land and an assignment to build a new road. Except for this plot and a truck in which to bring their belongings, the system provides them with nothing.

Just before they arrive to B, the political force in charge, bans all the flex-banner billboards around the city, in order to prevent unsustainable waste and unsustainable advertisements of political competitors for next year's elections.

The banned banners become worthless and the new homes for A, when they pick them up in order to built tents to live in. Here, the formal system exploits and provides for the informal system; the borders blurr.

A mutualistic connection establishes between the formal, which needs the informal to fill out its shortcomings and the informal who needs to dwell on what the system leaves behind, because it has nothing else and therefore cannot refuse.

B needs this type of workforce and only provides



just enough for  $\Delta$  to work and dwell, but not to lay in stock and establish.

Plots change but always on somebody else's whim and on a temporal basis.

Since  $\Delta$  doesn't know where they will go next, they cannot plan but can only react. There is no map, combining point after point in order to get a straight line, you could follow to create a history and thus a future.

$\Delta$  are navigators in the currents, relying on their surroundings and what these provide. In order to do so, they have to neglect the established strategic terrains, by trespassing, crossing and scrambling from different sources. They seize their opportunities, when a flex banner becomes a roof, electric power is accessed from the neighbors plot at night and concrete from the construction site is used to cast a floor in front of their tents. They form a temporal network of solidarity with the other  $\Delta$ 's and the objects they use, which are as temporal and unallocated as themselves.









Capital

Haiku Ho



ಭಾರತ ಸ್ವಾತಂತ್ರ್ಯದ 71ನೇ ವರ್ಷದ ಸಂದರ್ಭದಲ್ಲಿ  
**ಭಾರತ ಸ್ವಾತಂತ್ರ್ಯದ 71ನೇ ವರ್ಷದ ಸಂದರ್ಭದಲ್ಲಿ**

ಅಗಸ್ಟ್ 4ರಿಂದ ಅಗಸ್ಟ್ 15ರವರೆಗೆ



ಗಾಂಧಿ ಮನೆಯಲ್ಲಿ  
 ಭವ್ಯವಾದ  
**ಜೋಗದ ಜಲವಾತ**



ಈ ಬಾರಿಯ ವಿಶೇಷ  
**ಮೆಡಲ್‌ಗಳ ಅರಣ್ಯದ ಮೆಡಲ್‌ಗಳ ಕವಿಮನೆ**



ಬ್ಯಾಂಡ್‌ಸ್ಟಾಂಡ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ  
 ದೊರೆತ ಐನ್‌ಕ್ರೀಂ ಮೆಡಿಯಂ  
 ಮೆಡಲ್‌ಗಳ ಅರಣ್ಯದ ದೊರೆತ ಕಲಾಕೃತಿಗಳು



**Continental COFFEE**

ಸಮೃದ್ಧ ಮತ್ತು ಶ್ರೇಷ್ಠವಾದ  
 ಸೌಕರ್ಯ ಸವಿರುಚಿಯ  
 ನವೋದಯ



A needs to have a cellphone now, since everybody has one. They manage to buy one, but have no money to top up the balance. In order to save money, they tell the other A's only to give missed calls for different occasions. One ring: call me back. Two rings: I'm on my way. A thus becomes a part of the network without accepting its standards of use, by corrupting its function and not creating value for it. At the same time, they provide for the system as new customers—another currency that companies need urgently in order to gain more territory.

A manipulates the space they are given using non-standard logic to create power differentials across capitalistic networks.



[IMG 8](#)

A grew up with systematic failures, not expecting to get anything from the system. They don't trust in it. And the system never trusts them back. They don't expect it to work, so they decide to trust in not trusting.

But a lack of trust leads to a lack in keeping up standards and rules, which slowly scoops out central structures by substituting them with informal fixes.

When you look for your own solutions you become responsible for them, since there is no system to blame. Then, the given set of standards is discarded slowly. New connections of individual responsibility between jugaad network players get established.

Jugaad is decentral by its nature, because it offers customized solutions to customised problems. It pops up whenever needed, but rarely stays around.

Decentralised networks of temporary solutions and trust pile up: interlocking individual practices



and customised objects to create informal networks, running below or on top of existing ones. These networks have their own checks and balances, and no one can control them since they are always changing and don't follow a predictable strategy. They don't own terrain but exist in time; therefore, they can be mapped, not by classical methods, but by being inhabited.



[IMG 9](#)

A is a company delivering broadband internet connections—a new player in B. There is no time to wait for infrastructure and applied standards, as time is a market share; everybody knows that. B is the garden city that has trees everywhere in order to maintain a symbolic relationship between human and nature. The trees form a network throughout the whole city and since there are no fixed laws yet, the internet cables are simply threaded through the trees, every time somebody requests access to the new broadband network. The existing network of trees is hijacked by a new informal one, which has no time to gather his own space and, therefore, uses the trees and becomes a parasite to establish itself in space. Because B is now the broadband city and needs broadband access more than trees. Trees are of course not meant to be cable poles, but they can be if the limit of their function within B is bent.











A is an award-winning design studio, which develops and implements commercial products and services. For them Jugaad is like a screwdriver – a very versatile but general tool.

Jugaad is decentral and individual by its very nature, delivering a custom solution for each problem. As handy as it comes in finding an initial idea, as hard it is to set standards on this basis to achieve effectivity on levels of production, infrastructure and policy making, when everybody is always bending rules.

To scale up, you need centralised control over your production in order to maintain a certain quality.

Jugaad is not going for the long run here.



[IMG 10](#)

It is something that you rarely desire. It is not a design, but a pragmatic individual fix.

It is nearly impossible to commercialise, when



value arises as the resistance to the desire<sup>4</sup> to have something. Jugaad bypasses this logic by creating a self-made token that is emulating what is actually desired.



[IMG 11](#)

<sup>4</sup> See Georg Simmel's theory on the construction of value as the resistance to desiring something in his book "philosophy of money"

## Space and Time

Jugaad creates specific solutions and specific problems, without trying to generate universal, high-end engineered and long-lasting solution, but rather an ingenious provisorium that works by scrambling together what is available, stretching legal and social borders.

It trespasses the drawn borders of use, value and property by constantly finding shortcuts and workarounds as a “move from a state of relative inaction or blockage to an improvisational encounter.”<sup>5</sup>

To understand these dynamics of trespassing, let us have a look at two different kinds of movement, that Michel De Certeau developed in his book *the practice of everyday life*, researching about resistance by means of everyday actions and consume within and against ruling systems in place. Even though de Certeau's model simplifies and neglects complex economic

5 Amit S. Rai, “The Affect of Jugaad: Frugal Innovation and Post-colonial Practice in India's Mobile Phone Ecology,” *Society and Space* 33, no. 6 (2015): 985–1002, doi: 10.1177/0263775815598155.

biographies, it contrasts the difference between having a space and moving within the space of others, which I find fruitful to think about Jugaad as a practice of transgressing limitations and navigating within scarcity.

There are those with will and power. They are separated from their environment, since they have their own space and thus have control over a terrain. To maintain their power, they set borders against the others to protect, gather and calculate supplies, establish infrastructures, built panoptic watchtowers to guard, overlook and map their terrain, establish language and ways to control and use knowledge to calculate their future. They act from a safe-zone and can always redraw to it. They have power and control and are therefore the system in place.

Let's call them Strategies.

On the other side is scarcity. They own nothing themselves, so they have to live within the borders and splendour of others. They cannot

act, but only react and work with what is given and not with what is needed. They cannot gather resource or lay in stock, since they don't have a safe place to withdraw to and store. They subsist on opportunities that open up, taking only one step at a time. Having no space, gives them their only asset: Mobility; since there basically is nothing to lose. Let's call them tactics.

Jugaad is a tactical practice, since it is not meant to last but made from and for the very moment. It is a reaction, producing a "timespace"<sup>6</sup>, that only exists as long as needed or a given opportunity enables it.



6 Rai, "The Affect of Jugaad."

[IMG 12](#)



# Scarcity

For 2018, July 27 marks the day on which humanity's demand for ecological resources and services in the given year exceeds what the earth can regenerate in that year.<sup>7</sup>

Scarcity cannot be overcome by extractive growth; it should rather build the base of human economic and ecologic thinking.

Scarcity is a natural circumstance. No matter how much there is, every resource only has a certain quantity. Historically, the administration of this scarcity has formed the basis of human economic thinking. Scarcity can be produced and enhanced by regulating quantities through the idea of property, creating a system that gives individual groups a space they can shape, whereas others keep longing for their own. Having a space, bears the opportunity to forget that scarcity actually exists.

Most current economic systems today are stra-

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.overshootday.org/newsroom/past-earth-overshoot-days/>

tegic. Through the idea of property (owning a space), growth (planning a future), and value (objects of desire) objects circulate within economies, creating wealth and on the other side , scarcity.

In a strategic economy, every object has a specific function and therefore a place we put it. A key locks a door, a brand-logo manifests a social status and bricks built a wall.



[IMG 13](#)

We perceive objects mostly as commodities - having a function (use value) and value (exchange value), as this seems to be the most effective way of controlling them.

But an object can be natural, then a resource, a tool, a commodity, an artwork, waste or an artifact. Matter does not inherit a natural value, but a socially allocated and thus malleable.

Denying access while simultaneously creating desire for the same, through flattening the dimensions of objects in order to control their distribution and circulation. A closed circuit of desire, analysis and need constantly readjusts to create clearly marked borders of value and scarcity, rich and poor, functional and trash. The owners' and dwellers' world view, form a strange social bond – both agreeing that the one owns and the other does not, as if it were a law of nature.<sup>8</sup>

The practice of Jugaad is a general protocol that has historically and locally appeared wherever tactics are needed to find loopholes in these strategic “regimes of value”<sup>9</sup>; manifesting and enhancing existing inequalities and economic bottlenecks by creating fixed categories of value, use and rubbish.



[IMG 14](#)

<sup>8</sup> See Michael Thompson's, *Rubbish Theory* (London: Pluto Press, 1979) for writing about the status quo within social class systems.

<sup>9</sup> See Arjun Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).







## Navigating

You got to know  $\Delta$  a little by now. What can we learn from them in order to live within scarce conditions?

$\Delta$  lives in the currents and therefore always needs to be able to react and adapt. In order to do so,  $\Delta$  has created a set of skills to survive in scarcity – what is left when all the space is owned by others.  $\Delta$  lives with the objects surrounding them, seeing not only their assigned functions, but also the potential of the material itself. They bend norms in order to make the objects fit into their problems. This way of seeing, requires what we could call latency. You have to be able to see an object not only in the state you encounter it, but in all its dimensions to activate its full potential – a multi-dimensional gaze, that appreciates objects in their biography.

Speaking about ecology, this gaze might offer a better resolution to binary thinking about what is

trash and what is resource. What we inform and what informs us.

When  $\Delta$  is border crossing different systems in order to make a living from their leftovers, they constantly create bypasses, steal and bribe, invent, recombine, reuse and establish backdoors. By trespassing and hijacking, they keep up a time-space of decentralised resistance, that cannot be controlled or corrupted, as there is no property to attack. The tactical practice of Jugaad then guarantees, that no system can control its own terrain completely.  $\Delta$  learned to establish their own checks and balances, leaving them dependent but not immobile.

Being in these currents,  $\Delta$  developed a sense of navigation, that is not a route on an overviewsing systematic map, but uses each situation itself to re-evaluate and determine the next hurdle or step, being able to react and constantly change directions, even if this means taking a detour and slowing down sometimes.

We are recognising that our established ways of locating us within our environments, are not able to navigate in globally multi-layered scenarios and hyperobjects<sup>10</sup>. Buying an Avocado in **D** can cause a water-crisis in **P** as all the ground-water is used for mono-cultivation to fit the demand. Boarding a plane to **B** can cause a raise in the sea level in **G** and buying a product from **Z** instead of **T** makes hundreds of people suffer in **K** from losing their jobs.

Objects like climate change, data-clouds, power and wealth distribution and global supply chains cannot be fully understood and mapped, because there are too many players, layers, systems and temporalities are involved. There will be more people, fewer resources, larger networks, local action with global reaction and probably more and more borders.

Jugaad does not offer a solution to any of those complexities but perhaps a way of better getting along with them by first seeing what you have

<sup>10</sup> See Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2013) for information on objects that are so massively distributed in time and space as to transcend spatiotemporal specificity.

and then evaluate your possibilities. When scarcity becomes the base of your thinking and you are able not only to see the objects around you in their current status, but what else they could become. When you cross and trespass through borders in order to establish new connections. And when relying on the given provides you with the ability to cope with nonsense, with things how they are; that you won't understand; and there are many of them.



[IMG 15](#)









## Dirt

You need systems. You need standards and centralised procedures in order to scale and blossom. You need rules, a common language, infrastructure and borders, in order to give guarantees. You want to buy fresh rather than always tinkering and reusing. A network cannot exist only on hand-tied knots; it needs proper institutions and laws laying out solid grids that can handle and enforce policies and infrastructures.

Jugaad is always only just doing the job for the moment, not a strategy that is meant to benefit a bigger cause, or be something could be scaled up. Jugaad is grabbing what is there. As much as it solidifies, it is a selfish gesture that creates quick and dirty fixes – a practice that never wants to wait in line.

As much as it empowers the individual, it bypasses limitations and policies that are necessary to create a greater good. Jugaad

embraces ambiguity and impermanence. It is a dirty solution, but to quote Mary Douglas: „where there is system, there is dirt.“<sup>11</sup>

We should probably rethink Jugaad dwellers as essential in that they produce a constant error code that provides the possibility to look up from the map and see what is actually there.

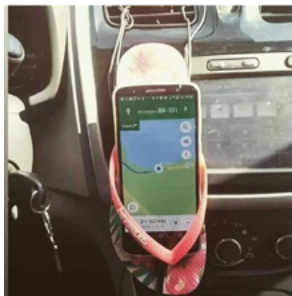
In scrambling from different sources, Jugaad practices meet and create new, informal networks of temporal knots. Those knots are messy and sticky connections and offer ways to surpass the existing cycles and their gatekeepers. Doing a Jugaad is a minimal act of everyday resistance that can inform others not to buy, consume and discard, but to wrap your head around the things surrounding you first.

„The low, the reduced, the underfoot, the dispensed, the rejected, the expelled are at the same moment the accumulated ground

<sup>11</sup> Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 1966), 44.

upon which the powerful steady themselves in order to reach rarefied heights."<sup>12</sup> This accumulated ground is constantly rumoring.

Bending, crossing, bypassing, bribing, improvising, hijacking, reusing, tinkering, fixing, dwelling. All of these tactical actions tear tiny errors in existing systems – minimal latencies in our aesthetical and economical everyday understanding, which create an underlying current. A constant reminder that things can be done different. That you stand on dirt all of the time.



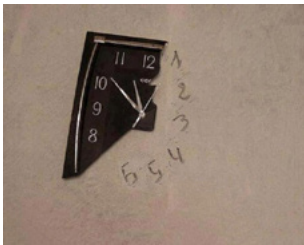
[IMG 16](#)

12 Hélène Frichot, *Dirty Theory* (Baunach: Spurbuchverlag, 2019)

A are navigators, who have developed skills of orientation for unknown terrain, when there is only edge connection. Where you cannot rely on what you already know. Navigating through global currents, you need the ability to cope with nonsense, to deal with scarcity and to wrap your head around things to see not only what you want, but what you have.

When the system glitches, when you are denied access, when your battery dies, when objects are strange, when you don't understand or when things need to get done.

Think about A.



[IMG 17](#)



IMG 18