On March 15, 2020 the San José art center TEOR/éTica made the decision to literally close their doors to the public for the remainder of the spring. Five days earlier, UC Berkeley had made the same call, moving all classes online and virtually shutting down the campus as a social space. In both cases, the closures would have to be extended well into the fall, if not longer. In TEOR/éTica's announcement of their closure, they, like UC Berkeley, recognized the public health crisis as demanding a radical gesture of care towards their immediate community—canceling scheduled events, moving new events online, and generally halting all in-person activity. And in that radically communal gesture of care, every person and institution invested in being-together was compelled by circumstance to ask: What kind of disruption to collectivity is quarantine?

This is a question I initially and naively attempted to answer for myself by shifting my research methods online. The logic is simple. With libraries unstaffed and air travel banned, I would simply need to find digital analogs through which to answer what would amount to the same set of research questions: in short, what does art collectivism look like today? But instead of on-site archival work, I would work online; instead of getting to know people over coffee, I would conduct internet-based interviews. The bulk of my project was to be participatory ethnographic work with a number of contemporary art collectives (including TEOR/éTica), who, through their art, curation, writings, organization, and transnational networks, animate questions of collective practice on both local and global scales. Regardless of a shift in methods, the premise of my dissertation project seemed well-suited to asking after what goes into collectivity—with or without quarantine.

In spite (or maybe because of) my plans to study "collectivity" itself, a summer of self-isolation brought with it a melancholic reflection on collectivity without being-together. What became clear to me was that quarantine disrupted not only my travel plans but also what Cuban-Costa Rican curator Tamara Díaz Bringas called the "critical proximity" necessary for a certain kind of research. Consciously opposing herself to the myth of "critical distance," Tamara uses "critical proximity" to attune her work towards a practice "of being engaged, of being part of the processes that [she] work[s] with; of producing criticism, writing, or knowledge *with* others; *together with others*, rather than about them… understanding that thought passes through the body."[1] The naiveté with which I initially adapted my research methods betrayed in me a kind of zero-point epistemological position from which I failed to account for how a disruption to being-together would fundamentally change the nature of a project about collectivity. The new virtual and distanced circumstances would require me to attune to the coordinates of my own body in this new situation.

These new coordinates of my body under the pandemic were marked by isolation, depression, and anxiety, a knot of feeling which would ultimately prove difficult to work through in any meaningful way. My own nostalgia for the collective and proximate practices of research gave TEOR/éTica's foundational project of place-making in Central America an aspect of universalism—a universalism I had originally thought was contrary to its regional scope. The *Estrecho Dudoso* curatorial project is a case in point. Virginia Pérez-Ratton, curator and founder of TEOR/éTica, saw through the exhibition "a geography [of Central America] transformed into a Place [*una geografía convertida en Lugar*]" and yet it was also that place of proximity which would "get the region to reflect on various aspects of itself, *beyond* merely its own configuration."[2] The national and individual isolation of the pandemic only underscores the urgency and precariousness of this critical phenomenology of place. This is the same precarity that Tamara points out, writing to Virginia on the occasion of the *Utrópicos* exhibition: "within certain small

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[1] Tamara Díaz, *Crítica próxima =: Critical proximity*, Primera edición, Escrituras locales. Posiciones críticas desde América Central, el Caribe y sus diásporas = Local writings. Critical positions from Central America, the Caribbean and their diaspora 1 (San José, Costa Rica: TEOR/éTica, 2016), 169. Emphasis my own.

[2] Virginia Pérez-Ratton et al., eds., *Virginia Pérez-Ratton: travesía por un estrecho dudoso = transit through a doubtful strait* (San José, Costa Rica: TEOR/éTica, 2012), 80–82.

structures such as TEOR/éTica, affective economies can generate a lot of precariousness" but tied up in that precariousness is also "something invaluable in the way that they are woven with caring relationships."[3] What is that *something* that Tamara gestures toward? What is it that lies *beyond* the mere configuration of place?

      With no end in sight of the pandemic quarantine, our collective staying-with-the-trouble of proximity and distance has been in many ways exhausting. If nothing else, it has forced me to radically rethink the questions I should even be asking after collectivity. I have to continue to remind myself that collectivity has always, at least in its modern formulation, registered a *deliberate* movement against a complex matrix of individualizing forces—political, economic, disciplinary. The social disruption of a pandemic is certainly unprecedented, but hopefully it also points to the urgency of TEOR/éTica's new collective practices today.

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[3] Díaz, *Crítica próxima =*, 184.