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Coalitional Politics and Ethics

Tania Bruguera's coalitional work and artist collectives

KATERINA PARAMANA

INTRODUCTION

Cuban artist Tania Bruguera creates work that ranges from performance to community projects to collectives and coalitions, often blurring the boundaries among them. Her projects, whether they are short- or long-term, are intended to function as 'useful tools' for a collective movement, re-establish 'aesthetics as a system of transformation' by having ethics at their core ('*est-ética*') (Sanromán and Kantor 2018: 26) and present situations that challenge spectators to become active citizens who question and unlearn normative behaviours (*Arte de Conducta* (Behavioural Art)) (Montenegro Rosero 2017). With all her work, Bruguera critiques institutions and power structures, including the Cuban government.

In this article, I discuss two of Bruguera's coalitional works and artist collectives: *Immigrant Movement International* (IMI) (2011–19), a socio-political movement and project she initiated in the United States to examine who is defined as an immigrant and that has included social, political and artistic actions and events, and Instituto de Artivismo Hannah Arendt (INSTAR) (2015–ongoing), founded and directed in Cuba by Bruguera aiming at policy change, which provides a space for the presentation of censored work and interaction of dissident thinkers and artists. I will suggest that, where politics in the one-party Cuban state are anything but coalitional, Bruguera creates coalitional work and collectives that nurture community, solidarity and coalitions across artforms and national borders. Through IMI and INSTAR, I argue, Bruguera enacts coalitional ethics and politics in the arts, against the Cuban government and worldwide against political economies that oppress and exploit, and, in doing so, offers practical insights for the creation of coalitions in both arts and politics. I begin with discussion on definitions of the term 'coalition' itself and on different theoretical deployments of it to demonstrate why Bruguera's particular approach to coalitional work is important. I then address the springboard and catalyst for her work, the complex Cuban politico-economic and cultural context, before focusing on IMI and INSTAR.

ON 'COALITION'

For a coalition to function effectively, as with any collaboration, it is necessary that those participating in it share a foundational understanding of what constitutes common purpose (and why) and an ethics of relation, and therefore of the ways it is acceptable to go about achieving a common goal – and at what cost. (For example, there needs to be an agreement that political interests will not get in the way of fundamental ethics.) However, understandings of what constitutes a 'coalition' should not be assumed because definitions of the term vary from one language to another and, indeed, some definitions are more useful than others in establishing how a coalition should function.

In the English language, 'coalition' is defined as an 'alliance for combined action', particularly regarding a temporary alliance of political parties (*Oxford Dictionaries* 2024). It is derived from the Latin verb *coalescere*, which means 'to unite, grow together, become one in growth' (*Etymonline* 2024). However, neither the definition nor the etymology indicate the reasons, terms and conditions for 'becoming one' for a 'combined action'. In Greek, the term for coalition, '*συνασπισμός*' (*synaspismos*), is defined as the union of two or more political or military forces to achieve a common goal (Triantafillidis 2014). Even more useful to thinking about coalitions is the etymology of *synaspismos*; derived from *συν* [*sin*] (plus/

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with) + *ασπίς* [*aspis*] (shield), the term comes from military terminology that indicated an allied faction of fighters, where each person protected the person next to them with their shield (ibid.). We find here, then, along with a common purpose/goal as the reason for the union, also the terms/conditions necessary for the actions of the united forces: by co-shielding, by protecting the person 'next' to oneself. *Synaspismos*, therefore, with its implied mutual protection of members, alludes to another important condition for coalitional work: that of solidarity. Similarly, while English definitions of solidarity imply unity, unanimity and a singular vision and/or agreement (*Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary* 2024), the Greek term for solidarity, *αλληλεγγύη* [*allilengii*], deriving from '*αλλήλων*' [*allilon*] (others) + '*εγγύτητα*' [*egytita*] (distance/proximity), is understood as 'the ethical imperative/obligation of members of a group to reciprocally support one another' (Georgakas and Triantafillidis 2014). This latter definition emphasizes the support of others as a right and responsibility and foregrounds the role of ethics and the need for protection of common rights and responsibilities. Most importantly it does so without the erasure of individuality or the assumption of unity, harmony or cohesion. Moreover, the etymology of *alilengíi* (that is, '*αλλήλων*' [*allilon*] (others) + '*εγγύτητα*' [*egytita*] (distance/proximity)) leads to its definition as 'the distance/relationship/proximity between people', and therefore to the consideration of the specifics of this relationship and their implications.

Through the lenses of *synaspismos* and *allilengii*, then, we can understand coalition as the co-shielding of members of a group and the ethical imperative of them to support one another. This understanding, in turn, offers an ethical foundation for coalitional work and demonstrates the need for a nuanced appreciation of the relations among those entering a coalition.

Many theorists have deployed the term 'coalition', embracing, critiquing or offering alternative terms to it such as 'assembly' and 'ensemble' (see, for example, Fowlkes 1997; Butler 2012, 2015; Moten 2003; Dean 2012; Radosavljević 2013; Kondo 2018; Eckersall and Grehan 2019). Most pertinent to the conversation here, and in relation to the above offerings of *synaspismos* and *allilengii*, are Franco 'Bifo' Berardi's and Judith Butler's approaches to solidarity and coalition, respectively. Berardi suggests that solidarity 'is not a political or moral word' but is instead about empathy, and that real change has to do 'with the body of the other, with solidarity' – new forms of which are needed today (2013). For Berardi, today's social movement must become 'a healer: a common breath/body/activity of healing' (ibid.). Crucial to an understanding and the building of coalitions are also Butler's arguments for practices of alliance (2012: 134) and for a conception of ethical obligation towards others that is grounded in precarity, which they consider the 'joint of our non-foundation' (148).[1] Butler's approach to coalition is crucial because it also sets the parameters for how to treat others *outside* the coalition. They, in fact, argue that we are ethically obligated to preserve the lives of others with whom we did not choose to cohabit Earth and whom we 'may not love … may never love, do not know, and did not choose' (150), but with whom we live, not out of their choice, in 'unwilled adjacency', in proximity (134):

> We struggle in, from, and against precarity. Thus, it is not from pervasive love for humanity or a pure desire for peace that we strive to live together … We can be alive or dead to the sufferings of others – they can be dead or alive to us. But it is only when we understand that what happens there also happens here, and that 'here' is already an elsewhere, and necessarily so, that we stand a chance of grasping the difficult and shifting global connections in ways that let us know the transport and the constraint of what we might still call ethics. (Butler 2012: 150)

Tania Bruguera engages in such coalitional practices. She creates work that: intends to co-shield (*synaspismos*) and support others as an ethical responsibility (*allilengii*); is based on an understanding of shared precarity (and aims to minimize it) and that 'what happens there also happens here' (Butler 2012: 150); and functions, in different ways, as an activity of healing (Berardi 2013). Her works *Immigrant Movement International* (IMI) and Instituto de Artivismo Hannah Arendt (INSTAR) demonstrate this approach to coalitional work and, in doing

[1] This is with the understanding that the goal should be to minimize precarity, which can be achieved in 'practices of alliance that assemble across distances to achieve those very goals' (Butler 2012: 134).

so, I will demonstrate, offer practical insights for coalitional work in art and politics. Cuba's complex politico-economic and cultural context is the springboard and catalyst for Bruguera's work, and particularly important to the type of coalitional practices she established through IMI and INSTAR.

THE CUBAN CONTEXT[2]

Indicative of the complicated politico-economic context in which Bruguera operates is Jacqueline Laguardia Martinez's opening to her article 'The political economy of contemporary Cuba' (2022): 'To evaluate contemporary Cuba from any dimension, be it economic, political, or sociocultural, is a challenging exercise', in particular because of its efforts in recent years to implement ambitious socioeconomic reforms (76). Reforms are how the Cuban government (referred to as *La Revolución*) has held on to power since Fidel Castro's arrival (1959) and until the present day with Miguel Díaz-Canel's presidency (2019–present) (76–95).

The relationship of the Cuban government to art and culture producers is particularly tricky, as evidenced by the many arrests of artists, including Bruguera. Cuban American artist and writer Coco Fusco observes, for example, that while *La Revolución* has created a range of institutions that support the development of artists, cultural producers and audiences, it simultaneously monitors conduct by placing limitations on speech, social interactions and behaviour, and demanding a 'continuous performance of consensus through collective displays of cooperation with state policy and voluntary labour' (2015: 10). Corina Matamoros, curator of Contemporary Cuban Art at the National Museum of Fine Arts in Havana, explained to me in an interview that the argument those in positions of power make, when faced with political work they do not want presented, is that the work is 'fine' but it is not the right time for its presentation; 'we have to wait' and present it later (Matamoros in an interview with the author 2020).

Yvon Grenier suggests that Cuba's cultural policy and governing strategy since the 1990s has been to oscillate between 'closing' and 'opening', and to alternate tactics of enforcement between 'openness and rigidity' (2018: 261). Through this strategy, it made market reforms that further concentrated power with the state (Corrales cited in Grenier 2018). With both cultural policy and the markets, the state decides who can do anything (for example, publish, have visibility, travel abroad and be pardoned), as well as how much and when (Grenier 2018: 262). Importantly, the state's ability to 'open and close' any field 'at the Comandante's whim keeps the various groups guessing and competing in a climate of uncertainty' (265). The strategy of opening improves both the government's international image and its national one by demonstrating that *La Revolución*'s past errors are corrected (ibid.).

Cuba, then, functions both as a panoptic disciplinary society (due to the government's invisible but ever-present surveillance gaze) as well as (because of its openings to market economics) 'a governmental society based on invisibility, in which population and economic processes operate behind our backs and are best left alone' (Featherstone 2013: 9). Its complex colonial history, historical relationships with the USSR and the US and constant reforms make it a particularly complex political economy: one that was initially a socialist political economy, which now functions as a panoptic disciplinary society, has recognized private property and foreign investment with the 2019 Constitution, and, in recent years, has been depending on the service economy (Laguardia Martinez 2022). More recently, as a result of government mismanagement and inefficiency, the decades-long US embargo and the pandemic, the government was forced to relax private sector restrictions and allowed approximately 10,200 private businesses to open (Adams 2024). The economic shift has resulted in deep divisions in the Cuban system; for example, those working for the state (such as doctors and teachers) make five to ten times less than those in the private sector (ibid.) and, while many already feel the state 'can no longer meet the basic needs of the population', the conditions are worsening (Hierrezuelo cited in Adams 2024).

This challenging politico-economic and cultural context clearly demonstrates the impact that political economy can have on art and everyday living. It is in relation to this context

[2] For more on this context see Paramana (2025).

that Bruguera operates and creates work that challenges it, and for which she has been arrested many times. As a consequence of governmental pressures, she has often left Cuba to create coalitional projects elsewhere. *Immigrant Movement International* is one such project.

IMMIGRANT MOVEMENT INTERNATIONAL (IMI) (2011–19)

Bruguera astutely articulates the goal of her practice and its relationship to politics, institutions and education:

> WHEN DREAMS ARE CAST ASIDE AS IMPOSSIBLE, when social promises become utopia, when equality is co-opted, this is the point at which my art begins. By creating a parallel universe where daily affairs can unfold differently, my work functions as an exercise in accountability – people are forced to confront the 'what if' moment. Behavior is the way through which my work communicates, and facts are my metaphors. Art becomes political when it achieves actual results: Politics are not a subject in my work but the material I use to create. As reality functions as my field of action, I employ art institutions as spaces from which to propose models of civil society – a place of education, where people can allow themselves the room to think and consider a different future. In my work, education is the process of learning how to *redirect failure and frustration back into society*: Failure is an operative and tactical element that has to be repurposed. (Bruguera cited in Cahill 2011, my emphasis)

In 2011, for example, having emigrated to the US, Bruguera 'redirect[ed] failure back into society' (that is, she repurposed failure and turned it into something positive and productive) by initiating *Immigrant Movement International* (IMI), a project that was located in Corona, Queens in New York City. IMI began with the question, 'What makes a person in the United States an immigrant?' To understand the immigrant experience in the United States, during the project's first year Bruguera co-habited in a small Queens flat with five undocumented immigrants and their children, while living on minimum wage and with no health insurance (Solomon 2020). Although Bruguera could at any moment extract herself from these challenging circumstances and therefore did not share the level of precarity the US immigrants experienced (which perhaps sheds light on some political limitations of this work), living with them gave her insight into their everyday lives.

IMI, often referred to as a socio-political movement concerned with interrogating who is defined as an immigrant and 'what it means to be a citizen of the world' (Tate Modern 2012), operated as a community space that positively contributed to the lives of immigrants at both political and personal levels through art and education. Through their engagement with contemporary art, immigrants were able to 'work from their fear' and find ways to deal better with the limitations placed on them once they entered the country (Bruguera cited in Art21 2021). IMI's Mission Statement articulates the aspirations and goals of the project and reflects the intended relationship between politics, institutions and education in Bruguera's work. IMI was 'a community space where practical knowledge [was] merged with creative knowledge through *arte útil* with a holistic approach to education open to all regardless of legal status'; it [wa]s 'a think tank that recognize[d] [the] (im)migrant's role in the advancement of society at large and envision[ed] a different legal reality for human migration' as well as 'a lab practicing artivist tactics and new tools for communication in the public sphere to access political dialogue in an effort to transform social affect into political effectiveness' (IMI 2011). It was also 'an educational platform formulating sustainability systems and creating alternative economies' based not on economic advantage but on a culture of reciprocity (ibid.).

Crucially, IMI's (IM)Migrant Manifesto evidences its coalitional politics, which reflect the approach of both *synaspismos* and *allilengii* and put into practice Berardi's and Butler's approaches to coalition and solidarity. The manifesto recognizes migrants' crucial contributions to the economies in which they work, their right for a better life and their demand for the same privileges as the international elite and corporations, which are free to travel and can choose where to establish themselves. It proposes that international borders need to be re-imagined to serve humanity, and that the idea of the

commons needs to be revived. It emphasizes that fear produces boundaries that lead to hate, benefiting only the oppressors, and that all citizens' rights are at risk when those of the migrants are denied (IMI 2011). As the manifesto demonstrates, the IMI coalition was based on a shared understanding of the ethical imperative to unite and co-shield one another (*synaspismos* and *allilengii*), of the value of migrants and the importance of solidarity between migrants and among all citizens. Through empathy for others (Berardi 2013), an understanding of shared precarity (Butler 2012) and the need to co-shield one another (*synaspismos*) and protect common rights and responsibilities (*allilengii*), the manifesto extends solidarity beyond the IMI coalition.

Putting the manifesto into practice, during its first year of operation (2011), IMI collaborated with more than thirty organizations to offer a variety of free,[3] high-quality services to meet the immediate needs of the community, such as actions that allowed migrants to reflect on immigration issues, participate in cultural events and write to elected officials. For example, along with developing the aforementioned manifesto, they invited artists internationally to participate on International Migrants Day (18 December) in a town hall meeting on the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act with the New York State Youth Leadership Council (IMI 2011). Learning English through art enabled women at IMI to find their own voice and consequently gain a sense of agency (Nisenbaum cited in Art21 2021). Members of the Aztec dance group Tletlpapalotzin, who participated in IMI's Community Celebration Day by performing together in a traditional ceremony, reported that doing so gave them pleasure resulting from a sense of community and the strength to 'go forward day to day' (Ramirez cited in Art21 2021). Through their participation in such initiatives, undocumented immigrants, who are invisibilized by society, felt welcomed, seen, heard and part of the community.

In its second year, IMI focused on strengthening the community and on developing legal services, an educational programme and a health programme to improve women's physical and emotional health and tackle issues of domestic violence (IMI 2011). As Bruguera's goal with IMI was to create the conditions for the creation of a political party – a coalition, 'a political power by immigrants for immigrants' (Art21 2021) – on 29 May 2012 she initiated a sister project in Mexico City: the *Party of Migrant People* (*Partido del Pueblo Migrante*) (PPM). Bruguera's aspiration was for PPM to have a concrete function in the political sphere by investigating how art 'can be part of the decision-making process in politics and operate in the realm of the political present tense' instead of commenting after the fact, like a news report (Bruguera cited in Cahill 2011). The project was presented in the context of the presidential elections in Mexico, where migration is a crucial issue but where no parties considered migrants a priority nor as political subjects (ibid.). PPM made the issue visible and pointed to the lack of consideration of the different kinds of immigrants, such as those who are only passing through or those who return as a result of deportation or economic crisis in the countries to which they migrated (Bruguera cited in Sierra 2012). In doing so, it demonstrated – as *allilengii*'s etymology itself suggests – a nuanced understanding of the relations between people and their environments and emphasized the importance of co-shielding (*synaspismos*), considering the preservation of the life of the other as paramount (Butler 2012).

In year three, IMI explored economic models that would enable women in the community to expand IMI's Women's Health Program; this would help them start a small business and, in doing so, guarantee their economic independence (IMI 2011). During this year, while maintaining the Corona headquarters, IMI also began operating as open source, aiming at becoming a lasting, global movement by 'establishing small "cells" and collective actions in various cities around the world', which took the form that suited the specific local political and social conditions (ibid.). IMI continued this work until 2018, and during 2018 and 2019 'transitioned to an independently run community center', the Centro Corona (Queens Museum 2025; Centro Corona 2025).

As the approach, function and practices of

[3] IMI was founded as a partnership between Bruguera and the Queens Museum in New York in 2011 (Queens Museum 2025). It was supported by Creative Time, a public arts organization, which 'works with artists to contribute to the dialogues, debates, and dreams of our times' (2025). It was also supported by grants from philanthropic organizations interested in art and culture, inclusive economies, social justice and the environment (that is, the Kresge Foundation, the Surdna Foundation and the Toby D. Lewis Philanthropic Fund), as well as by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the New York State Council on the Arts and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (Queens Museum 2025).

IMI demonstrate, IMI very much functioned as a *synaspismos* based on *allilengii*: it safeguarded and co-shielded (*synaspismos*) not only US migrants but also Bruguera, who, via this work, was able to sustain a critical artistic practice outside the strictures of the Cuban government and its threats for her arrest; it united precarious communities based on an ethical obligation to support others (*allilengii*); and acknowledged shared precarity (Butler 2012), but also that IMI community members, like Bruguera, might experience different types or levels of it. It created community, upskilled members and provided crucial services for them, afforded Bruguera and the community members the opportunity to learn from one another, created nuanced relations among those entering the group by identifying shared understandings and goals as well as differences, and treated those outside the coalition in ways that acknowledged the importance of extending coalition and solidarity beyond the migrant coalition group (*allilengii*). Crucially, it acknowledged practically the importance of empathizing with the other (Berardi 2013), being accountable and preserving their life (Butler 2012), and mobilized through collaboration beyond the migrant coalition everyone who is and can be connected to the project (for example organizations, institutions and elected officials). In doing so, it extended its life, scope and reach – and it did so in a considerable effort to create a reality not yet existing, a world that can be different. The Institute of Artivism/Instituto de Artivismo Hannah Arendt (INSTAR) aimed to do exactly this.

INSTITUTE OF ARTIVISM/INSTITUTO DE ARTIVISMO HANNAH ARENDT (INSTAR) (2015–PRESENT)

In 2015, as a response to arrests of Bruguera and her collaborators at the presentation of *Tatlin's Whisper #6* at Havana's Plaza de la Revolución, Bruguera presented a work that became the foundation for the Institute of Artivism/Instituto de Artivismo Hannah Arendt[4] (INSTAR), but that also led to more arrests. Along with another eighty-three people, Bruguera was again detained following a 100-hour open collective reading by artists and dissident thinkers of Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) in the studio in *Habana Vieja* (now INSTAR's headquarters) (*Documenta Fifteen* 2022). Starting on 20 May 2015, readers

> sat in an armchair with a microphone and transmitted Arendt's text through a loudspeaker, which carried into the streets around the house. The doors of the house remained open for almost five days. The event took place in the context of the 12th Havana Biennial. Fifty readers participated and more than 100 people attended, including passers-by, neighbors, students, curators, artists, activists, and the curious. (INSTAR 2015)

To sabotage the event, the government diverted a public works brigade from Old Havana to the street in front of INSTAR's entrance. The sound of jackhammers drowned the sound of the reading during the working day but not after 5 p.m. when the workers' shift ended (INSTAR 2015).

This performance set the example for INSTAR's strategy: to generate different kinds of responses from the government, turn the experience of those responses into 'a sustained effort for civic education that, through art and activism, would turn desires and ideas into actions' and consequently create 'a new non-violent vocabulary for public space in an inevitable transition' (INSTAR 2015). The institute's acronym, which is also a Spanish verb that means 'to instigate' or 'to invite', is in fact 'a call to action in the face of urgency, using civic education based in art' and contains 'the energetic force behind another verb: (em) power' (ibid.). INSTAR aims to 'foster civic literacy and policy change' (Mancoff 2025) and serves as a democratic space characterized by horizontality and decision making that results from consensus (Bruguera cited in INSTAR 2015). It intends to respond to the Cuban context in the hope that it is the projects it undertakes – instead of the government – that define Cubans' identity and desires (ibid.); it defines itself as an 'institution of the future in the present': one that considers the Cuba its citizens want to live in and experiments with and tests what does not yet exist (Coyula 2020).

By 2016, Bruguera had raised more than $100,000 for INSTAR through crowdfunding. She also launched the INSTAR website, transformed

[4] Artivism is a 'neologism formed by the union of the words: art and activism' (INSTAR 2015).

her house 'into a "Think Tank", a "Do Tank", and a "Wish Tank"', awarded an INSTAR residency to the Russian feminist punk collective Pussy Riot and released a video – a performance she hoped would bring attention to Cuba's one-party system – 'announcing that she would run in the 2018 Cuban presidential election' and encouraging others to do the same (Mancoff 2025).

By 2019, INSTAR had been consistently working on two areas: a pedagogical one and the 'building of a new referential horizon' (Coyula 2020). The former involved workshops delivered by international and national artists, academics and activists who brought Cuban tradition and approaches into dialogue with new knowledge and engaged in the practical exploration and application of civic exercises (ibid.) These aimed at making visible what constitutes contemporary Cuban thought and how it can be employed to improve current circumstances. For example, the 2017 workshop 'Questions for Cuba's Future', delivered by Greg Sholette and Olga Kopenkina, engaged with Cuba's future imaginaries, artistic processes that can lead to social transformation, and creative solutions proposed by existing collectives. The work on building new referential horizons encouraged and offered awards to support projects that either dealt with marginalized aspects of Cuba's history or proposed an alternative vision of it (ibid.).

The aims of INSTAR'S coalitional politics extend beyond that of an artist collective. In line with its social mandate and its 915 founders' beliefs that 'civic engagement implies sustained and solidary presence', that the answer to political violence is civic education and that better citizenship is made possible through culture (INSTAR 2015), INSTAR aims to gain legal legitimacy and transform itself into a cultural system/foundation that can be legalized (Coyula 2020). It serves as a space that provides refuge to and protects artists, activists and other organizations, and 'works on the restitution of historical memory' through an oral history archive and public programmes (INSTAR 2015). For example, at a presentation of INSTAR's work in 2022, through the project entitled *Operational Factography*, artists that had been censured and criminalized by the Cuban government had the opportunity to present a public programme, an archive, a poster project and short exhibitions through which visitors experienced 'a counter-narrative to Cuba's official artistic and cultural history' (ibid.).

INSTAR exemplifies *synaspismos* and *allilengii* as well as Berardi's and Butler's approaches: it co-shields (*synaspismos*), empathizes with the other (Berardi 2013), considers their needs and desires and protects common rights and responsibilities (*allilengii*); it creates a safe space that preserves the life of the other (Butler 2012) and rescues their history; and it demonstrates horizontal relationships based on consensus. Its efforts to be an 'institution of the future', existing and supporting others in the present through art and activism, extend solidarity to all through civic education and social work. As with IMI, INSTAR is a multifaceted project that does coalitional work across and beyond arts and national borders.

BUILDING COALITIONS ACROSS ARTFORMS AND NATIONAL BORDERS: INSIGHTS FOR COALITIONAL WORK IN ARTS AND POLITICS

Bruguera's confrontations with the Cuban government led, in 2021, to her departure from Cuba to take a position at Harvard University as senior lecturer in media and performance 'in exchange for the release of 25 political prisoners' (Mancoff 2025). Although one can argue that her works' efficacy varies at different points across times and even that her *Party for Migrant People*, for example, did not fully become a reality, or that INSTAR is not yet legalized, what is important is that she continues to create coalitional projects that enact and strengthen *allilengii* (solidarity). Her work therefore remains important in and outside Cuba. Bruguera understands and treats her work – as Butler (2015), Dean (2012) and DeLanda (2016) see assemblies, collectives and assemblages, respectively[5] – as a fragment of a bigger whole that can join other fragments for a better future, by mobilizing all tactics and moving across political and social spheres.

Through coalitional projects such as IMI and INSTAR, Bruguera nurtures community and solidarity and creates coalitions across artforms and national borders. She enacts coalitional

[5] For Butler (2012), assembling is necessary for actions of bodies in concert across nations and for the building of international alliances and coalitions. For Manuel DeLanda, assemblage – a multiplicity made up of heterogenous elements that establishes relations among them – is about co-functioning, about symbiosis made possible through alliances, that is, relationships that need to hold the parts together both in small assemblages and the larger assemblage of a society (2016: 2). Lastly, for Dean, collectivity needs to acknowledge 'how autonomy is only ever a collective product' and that 'fragments are parts of ever larger wholes' (2012: 224).

ethics and politics in the arts, against the Cuban government and worldwide against political economies that oppress and exploit, which offer practical insights for coalitional work both in the arts and politics. Through her work, we can see that, despite their decimation in recent years, educational and art institutions are crucial spaces for thinking up a new world, and that art and activism contribute to civic education, which is crucial for a healthy society and to the building of coalitions. Her work also demonstrates that coalitions are successful when they are welcoming, ensuring that participants are heard, feel valuable and are treated as equal co-creators of the new future they aspire to create, and make efforts to extend coalition beyond the initial community. Crucially, her work makes evident that a coalition succeeds in staying alive when it is based on a common ethical foundation, an understanding of shared (even not equally) precarity (Butler 2012) and empathy with the body of the other (Berardi 2013), and aims to co-shield (*synaspismos*) and unite precarious communities based on an ethical obligation to support others (*allilengii*). Lastly, through her work we see that lasting coalitions are the ones that manage to move across cultural, political and social spheres and national borders, establishing cells, performing collective actions, mobilizing everyone who is and can be connected to them and openly sharing knowledge and resources. And, perhaps, we can also see how an ever-expanding network of such coalitions can, over time, shift the current trend towards conservative thinking.

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